Constructing the global citizen
An ELF perspective

Peter I. De Costa
Michigan State University

Building on research on identity (e.g., Norton, 2013), intercultural communicative competence (e.g., Byram, 2008) and English as a lingua franca (e.g., Dewey, 2012), this article examines how the notion of a global citizen was constructed in a school-based ethnographic study involving students from Asia who were recipients of a Singapore government scholarship. Identity construction in this English-medium school was traced across four levels — national, school, classroom, and group interactions — in order to analyze the ways in which global citizenship was realized. Findings from the multiple data sets revealed that while a skewed interpretation of the global citizen was conceived at the school and classroom level, group interactions among students yielded promising indicators of how intercultural communication as mediated through English as a lingua franca could help produce students who are open minded and work actively to build relationships with others. The article closes with a discussion of possibilities for designing pedagogy to develop global citizenship education.

Keywords: identity, English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), intercultural competence, global citizen, cosmopolitanism

Introduction

Depending on the circumstances, conversations across boundaries can be delightful, or just vexing: what they mainly are, though, is inevitable.

(Appiah, 2007, p. xxi)

In Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers, the philosopher Kwame Anthony Appiah identified the challenges associated with intercultural communication and its inevitability. Given the climate of growing suspicion and mounting cultural misunderstandings today, cross-cultural conversations have become increasingly imperative. The resurgence of radicalism and violence is a case in point:
the recent terrorist attacks in San Bernadino, Sydney, Paris, and Copenhagen as a consequence of deep racial and religious insensitivities underscore the importance of building and sustaining trust between communities. Such trust building is pivotal in multicultural Singapore, which has seen new fault lines emerge in society, due largely in part to intra-Asian immigration (Yeoh & Lai, 2008).

As Singapore geared up to celebrate its 50th year on independence in 2015, calls to foster social cohesion and communal harmony intensified, lest the city-state “dissolve with globalization” (Khalid, 2015). Indeed, as Duchene and Heller (2012) aptly observe, nationalism in the age of globalization is not in danger of going out of style. However, renewed nationalism is often fuelled by insecurity and anxiety associated with immigration (Hiramoto & Park, 2014) and is borne out in countries like Singapore which have large immigrant populations. Alarmingly, the World Values Survey (www.worldvaluessurvey.org), conducted by a global network of social scientists studying changing values and their impact on social and political life, recently revealed that the tolerance level for immigrants among Singaporeans dropped over the past 10 years.

Admittedly, immigration anxiety is not purely a Singaporean phenomenon, but it does raise crucial questions about the need to rethink contemporary pedagogy and professional development. Peace, as the United Nations Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon reminds us, comes through education (Ban, 2015). In a similar vein, international education scholar Fernando Reimers (2006) has emphasized the need to educate the global citizen, that is, a person who embraces cultural diversity and international understanding. According to him, these characteristics constitute core competencies in the 21st century. It is against this call to nurture the global citizen that this article is situated. Focusing on how the identity of the global citizen is constructed through the use of English as a Lingua Franca in an English-medium secondary school in Singapore, this paper also underlines the pedagogical implications and possibilities for realizing such an endeavor.

**Theorizing the global citizen: Identity, intercultural communication, and ELF**

Identity work in applied linguistics over the past two decades (e.g., De Costa, 2016a; De Costa & Norton, 2016; Higgins, 2014; Miller & Kubota, 2013; Norton & Toohey, 2011) has argued that conceptions of the self as unified and coherent do not do justice to the complex, multiple, and changing identities of social beings. Underlining this body of research are the underlying assumptions that (1) identity positions may limit or enhance learning opportunities, and (2) power is often unevenly distributed in formal and informal sites of language learning. Further, recent applied linguistic research has suggested that identity needs to
be interrogated in the face of globalization and the hybridizing and intersecting movements of people (e.g., Heller 2011; Higgins 2011). These processes have led to increasing multilingualism in schools and society, and the production of what Higgins (2014) has called “millennium identities”, to index “the mechanisms that produce linguistic and cultural hybridity in the current era of new millennium globalization” (p. 373).

Equally important to consider is the relational aspect of identity which bears a performance element. In regard to the former and building on Judith Butler’s (1990) work on performativity, Bucholtz and Hall’s (2005) emergent principle conceives of identities as “constituted in social action with semiotic practices calling them into being in specific interactions” (p. 588). In short, contemporary applied linguistics emphasizes the social dimensions of identity and how these identities are enacted through communication and established relationships. Given that identities are performed during acts of communication, it is to the intercultural communication facet of identity that I turn next.

Zhu (2011) describes intercultural communication as a “situation where people from different cultural backgrounds come into contact with each other (p. 422). As noted, embracing cultural diversity is the cornerstone to being a global citizen in the 21st century (Reimers, 2006). Within applied linguistics, Byram (1997), a long time advocate of fostering students’ intercultural communicative competence, has maintained that such competence focuses on “establishing and maintaining relationships” (p. 3). As observed by him, foreign language teaching needs to move past teaching simply the exchange of information and sending of messages. More recently and in line with Risager (2007), he called for an expanded understanding of intercultural communicative competence that takes into account the critical and political dimensions of language education, arguing specifically that models of language teaching should encourage learners to transcend national-cultural associations and boundaries and aim towards ‘Intercultural’, ‘Transcultural’ or ‘World’ citizenship (Byram, 2008; for an update on intercultural competence see Garrett-Rucks, 2016).

In light of these key developments in identity and intercultural communication research, I turn to a third area of research — English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) — that is aligned theoretically with these two subfields in applied linguistics. That ELF and intercultural communication share common research agendas is underscored by Baker (2015), who notes:

ELF researchers, along with other researchers for intercultural … communication, have examined a range of communication strategies such as accommodation, code-switching, repetition, explicitness and pre-empting misunderstanding which facilitate the flexible use of linguistic forms (p. 133).
The centrality of being able to use the appropriate strategy to ensure successful ELF communication is also noted by Canagarajah (2013):

The hallmark of a lingua franca encounter is that there is no native speaker frame of reference, as multilingual speakers adopt English for their own purposes according to their own needs … Interlocutors can hold divergent values and still conduct successful communication … what matters is alignment (pp. 215–216).

Alignment, however, does not come at the expense of a speaker’s identity. As Jenkins (2007) observed, ELF has been seen as a means of identity expression, while Baker (2011) added that “ELF is neither [a] culturally impoverished nor [an] identity neutral form of communication” (p. 46). This view is instantiated in Sung’s (2014a) work with Hong Kong university students, who affirmed their identities as legitimate ELF speakers and viewed ELF as being part of their linguistic and cultural identities. As helpful as Sung’s findings were in expanding our understanding of ELF identities, this interview-based study did not, however, analyze how such identities were enacted during actual usage of ELF. Put differently, Sung’s study did not focus on the actual linguistic practices of ELF speakers but solicited their views about their identities as speakers of ELF.

In light of recent calls to take a practice-based approach to ELF (De Costa, 2012; Park & Wee, 2011) and to analyze interactions conducted in ELF, this study examines how global citizenship is constructed in the Singaporean educational context. Like Seidlhofer (2011), I see ELF speakers as (1) adapting their communicative behaviors to accommodate their interlocutors; (2) being creative and resourceful; and (3) exploiting their previous linguistic experience as they engage in meaning-making processes. Further, and in conjunction with recent work on cosmopolitanism (Appiah, 2007; De Costa, 2014; De Costa & Jou, 2016), this paper is guided by the view that a global citizen is a person who is open minded and works actively to build relationships with others. Also underpinning this paper is the assumption that ELF and global citizenship are inextricably linked, as observed by Sung (2014b): “ELF communication inevitably involves … inculcating an open-minded attitude in L2 learners towards linguistic diversity in nurturing global citizens who are accepting of differences in today’s globalized world” (p. 39). Finally, to analyze how the ELF speakers in my study engaged in intercultural communication on an interactional level, I draw on Dewey (2012), who views successful communication in terms of the ability to:

- derive meaning from context
- paraphrase, summarize, and engage in circumlocution
- ask for clarification of meaning
- aid verbal communication through nonverbal communication
– display cultural sensitivity
– avoid culturally specific expressions or use them effectively with proper glossing or explanation
– know how to address miscommunication preventively and responsively

In sum, being a global citizen entails the embrace of cultural diversity, being open minded and working actively to build relationships with others. Such an emphasis on intercultural competence, which can be mediated through ELF, needs to be juxtaposed with an instrumentalist and narrow view that conceives of global citizenship in terms of marketable skills (Sancho, 2015) and the cultural capital investment of a global elite (Hayden, 2011).

The study

As mentioned, Singapore has experienced an influx of immigrants into the workforce. This phenomenon has also spilled into the schools, which are increasingly populated by immigrant students. In this paper, I draw on a larger year-long ethnographic case study involving five female immigrant students from China, Vietnam, and Indonesia, who were placed in an English-medium secondary school, Orchid Girls Secondary School (OGSS), in Singapore (for details of the study, see De Costa, 2014). Simply put, the immigrant students used English as a lingua franca to communicate not only with each other but also with their Singaporean peers and teachers, who themselves were multilingual and whose mother tongues included Mandarin Chinese, Malay, and Tamil.

The duration of the study, which was conducted in 2008, coincided with the school year, which in Singapore runs from January through November. To produce a thick description (Geertz, 1973) of events and to explore how global citizenship was constructed and intersected across a variety of levels, my data comprised observations, interviews, and artifacts (see Table 1).

The school-wide incoming cohort of immigrant students, who were recipients of Singapore government scholarships, had been recruited the previous year in 2007. In total, 25 students were selected from three countries: China (13), Vietnam

1. As with all other names in this paper, this is a pseudonym. OGSS is an autonomous (i.e. semi-independent) public school that receives funding from the Ministry of Education. In Singapore, schools are broadly categorized according to independent, autonomous, and neighborhood (i.e., urban) status, with independent schools being the most elite and exclusive. As an autonomous school, OGSS was generally viewed as a good school and had a largely Singaporean (over 80%) student population, in contrast to private international schools (e.g., Hayden, 2011) that cater to affluent expatriate students.
(6), and Indonesia (7). I chose to focus on the five students in one particular class because it had the largest concentration of scholarship students at OGSS. As discussed elsewhere (De Costa, 2015; 2016a, b), the presence of these academically able students did generate anxiety among the local Singaporean students and the immigrant students themselves. While recognizing the importance of anxiety that emerges as a consequence of border crossing (Hiramoto & Park, 2014), this paper explores how the global citizen was constructed at four distinct levels: at the national level, the school level, at the classroom level, and at the group discussion level. Due to limitations of space, this paper focuses on just one of my immigrant focal students, Wendy, who came from China.

Table 1. Data sources

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Global citizenship at the national level

Twenty first century competencies include the ability to embrace cultural diversity (Reimers, 2006). The importance of these competencies is embodied in the Framework for 21st Century Competencies and Student Outcomes (http://www.moe.gov.sg/education/21cc/) developed by the Ministry of Education in Singapore. To survive in the age of globalization, the framework underlined the importance of global awareness and being a concerned citizen as well as cross-cultural, communication, and collaboration skills (see outer ring of Figure 1). The Ministry’s belief that such a set of dispositions can be cultivated suggests that identity is not viewed as a static entity; rather, and in keeping with much of contemporary identity research (e.g., Bucholtz, & Hall, 2005), being an able student is framed in performative terms and is mediated through communication. The emphasis on these 21st century competencies also invites comparison to the notion of intercultural competence articulated by Byram (1997, 2008) and Risager (2007) discussed earlier. Admittedly, the term ‘global citizen’ does not appear in the framework; rather, the term ‘concerned citizen’ is used. However, the overall sentiment conveyed in the framework strongly suggests the significance accorded to cultivating intercultural competence within the national education system.
Global citizenship at the school level

As noted, Singapore’s Ministry of Education seeks to develop successful students who can thrive in an era of globalization. Given that Singapore has a nationalized and regulated education system, it is not surprising that initiatives which originate from the Education Ministry become embedded in all public schools, including OGSS in which this study was situated. Equally important at the time of my study was how the Singaporean government envisioned Singapore as a global and cosmopolitan city which would be a magnet for talented individuals, a point that continues to be emphasized by the Prime Minister even today (Lee, 2015) in order to counter an ageing population and to keep the local economy competitive. In keeping with the desire to plug into a global matrix and the pressure to be international and to internationalize (Hayden, 2011), the authorities at OGSS actively sought to provide its students international cultural exposure and thus nurture global citizens. One way to do this was to import students from abroad. This plan was realized through OGSS’s international program and is described in the following excerpt that appeared in its Open House booklet, which introduced prospective students to the school:

Excerpt 1
Collaboration with our outstanding overseas partner schools provides a wealth of opportunities for our pupils to learn beyond the confines of the classroom and make global connections. Through sharing of academic knowledge and cross-cultural interactions, our pupils display greater social awareness and develop into discerning, articulate individuals who are knowledgeable about geopolitical issues. (Open House 2008 Booklet, p. 12; emphasis added)

According to the above excerpt, a primary objective of mounting such an internationalization campaign was to cultivate students who had “greater social awareness” and were “knowledgeable about geopolitical issues,” characteristics which complement those identified by Byram (1997, 2008), Higgins (2014), and Risager (2007). These characteristics were developed through “cross-cultural interactions.” To achieve this goal, OGSS organized a series of outward bound collaborations which included sending students on exchange programs with schools in Hong Kong, South Africa and the United Kingdom, while also hosting students from these schools when they visited Singapore.

While these projects certainly provided OGSS students with much sought after international exposure, and afforded the school an opportunity to respond to national pressures to internationalize the curriculum and distinguish itself from local competitor schools, there was also another category of projects that was mobilized to develop global citizens. These projects as illustrated in Excerpt 2 were
motivated by a desire to inculcate a sense of benevolence towards “less developed” countries. On a particular Wednesday morning in August 2008, the following message from the tennis team at the morning assembly, a daily ritual in Singapore schools, caught my attention. An unedited segment of this speech is reproduced below:

Excerpt 2
Singapore is a cosmopolitan city which people live harmoniously in and unity in diversity is the philosophy in this city. Singaporeans are united with the Singaporean spirit. The spirit to make things happen, the spirit to grow, change and be the leading economic hub in South East Asia. (Field notes, 8/20/08, emphasis added)

Notable in this excerpt is how Singapore is singled out as “the leading hub in South East Asia” and described as a “cosmopolitan city,” inhabited by people belonging to the four major ethnic groups who live harmoniously together. Casting Singapore as an economic power among poorer Southeast Asian nations was also particularly poignant because it served a larger purpose of inculcating a moral responsibility among OGSS students to help those who were less privileged. It could be surmised that in enunciating an understanding of Singapore as the premier economic hub in Southeast Asia, the two Singaporean students at the assembly were also implicitly articulating what they saw as the school’s mission to help regional countries that were less economically blessed than Singapore. Indeed, a crucial part of realizing this benevolent cosmopolitan vision for its students — an index for becoming a global citizen — entailed developing a sense of compassion for the underprivileged. OGSS students were constantly reminded about how fortunate they were and that it was their moral responsibility to help those who were less fortunate. Ironically, this moral imperative as demonstrated in this excerpt and subsequent excerpts was guided by a prejudiced representation of others. Furthermore, a skewed interpretation of global citizenship, that is one that emphasized economic disparities and reminiscent of Wallerstein’s (2004) world systems theory, which views the globe as comprised of two major unequal zones, seemed to be propagated at OGSS.

Global citizenship at the classroom level

The institutional construction of a global citizen was inextricably linked with compassion and awareness of privilege. In fact, throughout my year at OGSS, I observed how the students were constantly reminded about how fortunate they were to live in Singapore, a sentiment that was crystallized when two natural disasters — Cyclone Nargis that struck Myanmar and an earthquake in Sichuan, China
— resulted in the school deploying resources to raise funds for the cyclone and earthquake victims. To their credit, the school officials and students did (1) exhibit a genuine sense of concern for those who were less unfortunate, and (2) attempt to cultivate global awareness and concerned citizens (Figure 1); at the same time, however, this concern was predicated on the framing of the global citizen as one who enjoyed economic privilege and had marketable skills and desired cultural capital. Such a conception of the global citizen underscores how issues of identity are often associated with inequitable power relations (De Costa & Norton, 2016; Higgins, 2014), a point that is amplified in two class-wide discussions (Excerpts 3 and 4) that strongly suggest that a superiority-inflected understanding of a global citizen was in circulation within OGSS and which ran contrary to the global harmony that the school ostensibly sought to develop.

That Singapore was a paradise in the midst of neighboring political mayhem was conveyed on a number of occasions, but most directly in Excerpt 3. In this classroom interaction that took place during a Social Studies lesson on ASEAN, Mrs. Loh, the Social Studies teacher, is seen talking about the political troubles in various ASEAN countries.

Excerpt 3
1  Mrs. Loh:  Which is the most troublesome politically?
2  Students:  Indonesia.
3  Mrs. Loh:  Why Indonesia? Because of terrorism? Which one do the other nations have problems with?
4  Eunice:  Myanmar.
5  Mrs. Loh:  Why is it contentious?
6  Hoi Yan:  [Cyclone] Nargis.
7  Mrs. Loh:  Would they have problems with Myanmar just because of the cyclone? Aung Sung Suu Kyi …. She’s under house arrest³ ….
8  Rui Min:  Thaksin.
9  Mrs. Loh:  What about Thaksin?⁴ Who was pronounced guilty of corruption? His wife?
10  Natasha:  She escaped.

2. ASEAN = Association of South East Nations, comprising Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore, Thailand, the Philippines, and Vietnam.

3. This piece of information was factually incorrect. Aung Sung Suu Kyi’s British husband was at that time still alive and residing in Britain with their son. She was released from house arrest in 2010 and since then has reentered Burmese politics.

4. Thaksin is the former billionaire Prime Minister of Thailand who was forced out of power after a coup following allegations of corruption. He continues to live in exile in Dubai.
Mrs. Loh: She was on bail .... Now they’re seeking political asylum in Britain. So you can see this region is troublesome: Indonesia, terrorism; Myanmar, human rights; Thailand, Malaysia, political upheaval. Malaysia. What’s going on there?

Yolanda: Anwar.

Mrs. Loh: Who’s Anwar? Mahatir’s former deputy. He was charged with sodomy and thrown into jail .... Still one more country.

Khadija: Cambodia.

Mrs. Loh: What’s Cambodia famous for?

Michele: Killing Fields.

Yin Tian: Mrs. Loh, what’s “sodomy”?

Mrs. Loh: Anyone wants to tell us what “sodomy” means?

Sher Min: Gay! (the other girls start looking furiously into their dictionary, and then laugh)

(SS/8/21/08)

A review of the above classroom exchange reveals that the interaction follows largely a question-and-answer pattern as very often Mrs. Loh would ask a question (e.g., Turns 1, 9, and 13) in anticipation of a response (e.g., Turns 2, 10, and 14). The exchange takes place at a rapid pace, with little attempt to provide an evaluation of the students’ responses, suggesting that contrary to findings on ELF research (e.g., Baker, 2011; Dewey, 2012; Seidlhofer, 2011), there was little effort to build solidarity with her students.

This class-wide exchange also turns out to be a listing of political troubles encountered in the various Southeast Asian countries: terrorism in Indonesia (Turn 3), violation of human rights in Myanmar (Turn 7), corruption in Thailand (Turn 9), an interlacing of political upheaval and sodomy in Malaysia (Turn 13), and war crimes in Cambodia (Turn 16). Instead of creating an inclusive classroom in line with an education system that was oriented towards cultivating global broad-minded citizens, the classroom conversation ends with a truncated understanding of “sodomy,” which unfortunately not only becomes an object of derision, but also ends up being an issue that fails to receive further clarification.

5. At the time of this lesson, the sodomy debacle surrounding Malaysia’s former Prime Minister, Anwar Ibrahim, had been resurrected by the Malaysian government as Anwar, the leader of the opposition political party, had scored a major victory in the March 2008 Malaysian elections. Anwar is currently serving a five-year prison sentence, commencing in 2015, after his sodomy conviction was upheld.

6. Mahatir Mohamed had been Malaysia’s Prime Minister for 22 years from 1981 until he stepped down in 2003.
Perhaps more disturbing is how the other Asian countries are “othered” and framed in a negative light, resulting in cross-cultural miscommunication. This exchange is crucial because it provides a basic understanding of one way foreign countries were viewed, and by extension, how citizens of these countries may probably also have been viewed. Regrettably, prejudices against a country and its people are inextricably linked with one another (Blackledge, 2004). The implied message transmitted here is that not only are these countries poorer than Singapore, their leaders and people are morally impoverished and incapable of proper management. This was certainly my impression as I sat at the back of the classroom while Mrs. Loh ran down the laundry list of countries. In particular, I wondered how the immigrant students in the class — in particular the ones from the Southeast Asian countries of Indonesia and Vietnam — reacted as she did this. While Vietnam was not mentioned in Mrs. Loh’s litany of criticisms, Indonesia was and I wondered how my Indonesian focal student felt as Mrs. Loh’s discourse positioned Indonesia as a country rife with terrorism (Turn 3). In his study on the perception of other ELF speakers within the Hong Kong ELF community, Sung (2014b) found that his Hong Kong participants held negative views about several East Asian speakers of English, especially from Korea and Japan. Such an East-East prejudice was ostensibly present in Excerpt 3, which smacked of arrogance. Put differently, on a surface level, global citizenship in terms of knowledge about neighboring countries is illustrated in this excerpt. However, it is a “cosmopolitan” attitude that is tinged with an air of superiority that excludes rather than includes others. Such a perspectival interpretation of cosmopolitanism/global citizenship also emerges in the next excerpt, where such prejudices extend to my focal immigrant students through the English teacher’s positioning of the students and their home countries.

In Excerpt 4 Mrs. Tay, the English teacher, picks up on a topic about taking lifestyles and expectations for granted. She then addresses how Singaporeans may be guilty of taking their lifestyles and expectations for granted.

**Excerpt 4**

1. Mrs. Tay: Imagine yourself, when you went to OAC, it wasn’t the lifestyle you expected at the camp. Let’s say you’re going to live that kind of OAC life, you have to get used to bathing with cold water. All right, the toilets had flushes, but remember you had to queue to go to the toilet. So let’s say if you migrate to another country, would you expect hot water? … Naomi?

2. Naomi: I’m used to bathing with cold water.

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7. OAC=Outdoor Activity Camp
Okay then, let’s talk about another aspect of your lifestyle. When you eat, recently we went to Batam right, the water that was served to us was cold water. It was a bit yellowish …. Let’s say for example, I know some parts of China are very developed, and certain parts of Vietnam like Ho Chi Minh are very developed, but when you went back, okay for those of you who went back recently, did you find it hard to adjust back to life in China?

No.

No? Okay now, I think life here, if you have a comfortable life here, you know Singapore imports a lot of foreign domestic helpers, right? The foreign domestic helpers said that when they went back home, they couldn’t get used to life there. Why? Because when they work in Singapore, what do their employers provide? That cake of soap, and hot water. In their villages, all these are not available, and life is difficult.

Like the previous excerpt, Mrs. Tay’s questions and comments come thick and fast. Relatedly, Sung (2014a) reminds us of power issues that continue pervade ELF communication: “[T]he notion of an ELF community does not seem to resolve the issue of perceived power imbalance between different speakers of English” (p. 108). Not only is a power imbalance observed in Excerpt 4 with Mrs. Tay calling all the proverbial shots, but what comes across quite distinctly from the conversation is the conspicuous lack of empathy and understanding for people within Southeast Asia, who are framed in tropes of poverty. Put simply, Mrs. Tay, who is tasked with developing global citizens herself ironically falls glaringly short of this ideal. Particularly striking in this excerpt is how “migrating to another country” (Turn 1) is conceptualized as a compromise of one’s standard of living: one has to forgo hot water and proper sanitation facilities (Turn 1, 3 and 5).

Almost five months after the students had attended a three-day Outdoor Activities Camp (OAC) that took place at the end of February, this event continued to be invoked in classroom conversation. Given the relatively privileged home backgrounds of most students at OGSS, OAC served as a base line of subsistence and survival. Mrs. Tay’s explication of having to endure suffering in terms of denied access to hot water is quite humorously punctured by Naomi, a Singaporean student, in Turn 2 when the latter proclaims that she is used to “bathing with cold water.” This response consequently leads Mrs. Tay to shift her attention to specific Asian countries — Indonesia (Batam), China, and Vietnam (Ho Chi Minh), the home countries of my five focal immigrant learners. In one broad stroke, all three

8. Batam is an Indonesian island that is 30-minute ferry ride from Singapore.
countries are associated with poor infrastructural development. For example, the water in Batam is perceived to be unsafe for Singaporeans.

Next, with the exception of “some parts of China” and “certain parts of Vietnam” (Turn 3), China and Vietnam are constructed as being physically under-developed. This interpretation is then put forward specifically to the immigrant students from China (Turn 3: “[O]kay for those of you who went back recently, did you find it hard to adjust back to life in China?”) for discussion. Wendy (one of my participants from China) responds to this proposition by denying its accuracy (Turn 4), following which Mrs. Tay changes conversational tack in Turn 5, where she ends up commodifying the domestic helpers from Asian countries. Not only are these helpers “imported,” they are presented as being unable to re-adjust to the spartan lifestyles upon their return home: soap and hot water, are apparently privileges available only in Singapore, and not in the Asian villages from where these helpers come. In short, and as Excerpts 3 and 4 illustrate, there were limits to realizing the vision of creating global citizens on the school and national level even though English was used as a lingua franca among the different ethnic groups at both levels. On a more positive note, however, it was heartening to see how Naomi’s (Turn 2) and Wendy’s (Turn 4) responses to Mrs. Tay challenged her positionality, suggesting that there was space for engagement with difference and developing global awareness. It is such global awareness development and how the global citizen was constructed and enacted at the group discussion level, which is examined next.

Global citizenship at the group discussion level

Contrary to the perception that all classroom talk was unilinear and regulated by OGSS teachers as illustrated in Excerpts 3 and 4, my classroom observations also revealed that much dialogic talk (Bakhtin, 1981) also took place among the students of OGSS. Small group discussions in particular afforded both my immigrant students and their Singaporean peers opportunities to engage in constructive intercultural communication when discussing academic work. Significantly, as Excerpts 5 and 6 will demonstrate, ELF was skillfully used by one of my focal students from China, Wendy, to discursively enact a global citizen identity with her Singaporean classmates during group discussions. These group discussions were shaped to a large extent by a curricular innovation — Socratic questioning — that was implemented across two semesters at OGSS during my year of study.

9. Many middle class families in Singapore employ live-in domestic helpers (commonly referred to as “maids”) from neighboring Asian countries. The majority of the domestic helpers come from Indonesia, Sri Lanka, India, and the Philippines.
As a new pedagogical practice, Socratic questioning was implemented in stages: first through a general introduction to the principles and practices associated with it; next, through an assignment of reading materials that the students were expected to draw on and make reference to during their group discussions; and finally through a group Powerpoint presentation and individually authored essays. In Excerpt 5, the group is seen discussing the topic, *Mobile phones have become an addiction instead of a necessity.*

**Excerpt 5**

1. Elaine: Do you think they’re really addicted to it?
2. Mili: Ya, when their phone doesn’t ring for some time, they think there’s something wrong with it because it doesn’t ring. Wendy, you have that example of your friend, right?
3. Wendy: Ya, in my room (girls laugh). Ya, just now I told them one of my friends, she’ll get very happy when she gets SMS.¹⁰ When there’s a whole day without SMS, she will complain ….So we can say, er … SMS affects our daily life.
5. Wendy: Ya, when they don’t get an SMS, they think something’s wrong.
6. Mili: So they like thinking about imaginary messages. (girls laugh.)
7. Nancy: Just like, just now, students, they use SMS, they can’t concentrate on the teacher, and they cannot study.
8. Wendy: Sometimes, they rather play with their handphone¹¹ than go out.
9. Mili: So when you revise your work, you must turn off the handphone.

(SQ1W 5/2/2008)

According to Virkkula and Nikula (2010), “ELF has been perceived as serving very practical purposes of information transfer rather than featuring strongly in identity construction” (p. 256). As reflected in this excerpt, in addition to performing the function of information transfer about the topic of mobile phone addiction, ELF also mediated phatic communication in that it allowed Wendy to draw on a personal anecdote (Turn 3), which prompted the laughter of her peers (Turn 6).

Further, through their use of ELF, Wendy and her Singaporean classmates demonstrated their ability to use several strategies for successful intercultural communication as identified by Dewey (2012). These strategies include: (1) asking for clarification of meaning (Turn 2: “Wendy, you have that example of your friend, right?”); (2) avoiding culturally specific expressions (Turn 2, where Wendy...)

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¹⁰. SMS = text message

¹¹. handphone = mobile phone
relates the general story of her friends messaging texts without using any culturally specific expressions); (3) deriving meaning from context (Turn 3, where Wendy concludes that based on her story mobile phones have indeed become an addiction; “So we can say, er . . . SMS affects our daily life.”); and (4) knowing how to address miscommunication preventively and responsively (Turn 8, where Wendy uses the local Singaporean term ‘handphone’ instead of ‘mobile phone’, thereby demonstrating that she is aware of how these terms are used variedly in different cultural contexts).

Jenkins (2000) maintains that “intelligibility is dynamically negotiable between speaker and listener” (p. 79). This mutual objective is realized in Mili’s response at Turn 4 (“SMS affects our daily life”), when she reiterates what Wendy had said in the previous turn. Wendy (Turn 5) immediately echoes Mili’s suggestion, an open recognition of her contribution. The conversational rhythm is sustained by Nancy (Turn 7) and Wendy and Mili (Turns 8 through 10), as they keep the discussion on track by reinforcing how text messaging on mobile phones can be a major source of distraction. In sum, bound by the norms that characterize Socratic questioning and using ELF, Wendy and her Singaporean peers generate a productive group discussion that is emblematic of successful intercultural communication. It is through such communication that Wendy and her peers were able to enact and develop characteristics of a global citizen on an interactional level.

As stated, Socratic questioning was a new curricular initiative. During the month-long June school vacation, the students in Wendy’s class were assigned readings based on the two natural disasters in Myanmar and China that were described earlier. Based on a set of vacation readings that had been assigned to them, the students had to discuss the following topic: Human greed is the sole cause of environmental problems.

**Excerpt 6**

1 Eileen: What are some examples of human greed?
2 Wendy: Like they overfish.
3 Sheng: Overmining.
4 Wendy: And cut down the trees.
5 Sheng: Okay, so we have three examples for our viewpoint. Now we need evidence.
6 Naomi: Tina, Tina, can I see the blue file?
7 Wendy: Some evidence?
8 Sheng: Like the floods in Indonesia could be due to carbon dioxide emissions because of deforestation.
9 Eileen: And this leads to global warming.
10 Sheng: What else ah?
11 Naomi: Manufacturing products, like factories.
ELF speakers, according to Seidlhofer (2011), (1) exploit their previous linguistic experience as they engage in meaning making processes, and (2) are creative and resourceful. The former characteristic is manifested in Turns 5 and 7 when Sheng and Wendy, respectively, ask for “some evidence” to be produced. Their request for evidence is indicative that Socratic questioning, which had been introduced in the previous semester, had become a linguistic resource for them to tap. The latter characteristic, that of creativity and resourcefulness, is exhibited when the students brainstorm the various types of pollution — air, water, and land pollution — in Turns 14 through 17. Also noteworthy is the greater sensitivity shown toward Indonesia in the students’ discussion of the floods there (Turn 8). In contrast to Excerpts 3 and 4 where Indonesia was discussed in a disparaging manner (i.e., being embroiled in shady politics and a source of untreated water), the floods in this excerpt are discussed in a more objective way, as example of an environmental problem.

As in Excerpt 4, noticeably present are the supportive moves exhibited by the Wendy and her Singaporean peers, who establish a conversational synchrony as they build on each other’s turns; the students provide examples of human greed in response to Eileen’s request (Turn 1) for evidence. Wendy, specifically, provides two examples: overfishing (Turn 2) and the cutting down of trees (Turn 4); these points are subsequently ratified by Sheng (Turn 5). Further, and in keeping with Dewey’s observation ELF speakers paraphrase and clarify their meanings, Wendy provides clarification in response to Sheng’s request (Turn 13: “What?”) for information about the industries she mentioned.

Byram (1997) maintains that fostering intercultural communicative competence helps language learners understand how the language they produce will be perceived and interpreted within a different cultural context, primarily by having them learn how to take up the role of the listener. In this context, such competence was facilitated through the use of ELF. As seen in the ongoing discussion, Wendy (Turn 14) quickly resolves the lack of understanding on Sheng’s part by adding that industries “pollute the air and water.” Her reformulation is successful: Naomi (Turn 15) chimes in with further elaboration, “Industrial waste, causes air pollution, then water pollution.” That communicative alignment is accomplished is seen
through Wendy’s further contributions at Turn 16 (“And soil.”) and Turn 18 (“Ya. We should add global warming as a reason.”).

Together, this series of turns produces a ratcheting effect as the group puts forward a well articulated case of how human greed has destroyed the environment. The conversational alignment they demonstrate is consistent with Cogo and Dewey’s (2012) observation that ELF speakers “collaboratively achieve communication through accommodative manipulations” (p. 167). In sum, it is through their collaborative interactional moves that the Wendy and her Singaporean classmates were able to demonstrate identity aspects of a global citizen, that is, one who is open minded and works actively to build relationships with others.

Implications and conclusion

While the global flows of people across cultural and linguistic borders is something to be excited about, it has also generated much anxiety (Hiramoto & Park, 2014) because with such seismic changes come elements of uncertainty and unpredictability. Understandably, as observed by Said-Sirhan (2014), such anxiety and insecurity is magnified when individuals reside in the periphery. However, rather than reacting negatively to the inevitable changes wrought by globalization, a more prudent and productive response would be to explore the opportunities that education has to offer, especially since it holds immense possibilities for the preservation of social harmony. As shown in this study, one decidedly promising strategy is to nurture the global citizen by embracing cultural diversity and building collaborative relationships by starting from an interactional level. Put differently, ELF serves to facilitate the development of intercultural communicative competence which was central to global citizenship formation. Admittedly, plans to develop global citizens are not new and date as far back to ancient Greece. As observed by Hansen (2010), the Greek Stoic thinker, Diogenes, described himself publicly as a ‘kosmopolite’ (i.e., a citizen of the world) and urged his compatriots to look beyond local commitments and embrace larger horizons of concern. Within the field of education, there has been a renewed interest in cosmopolitanism, prompting Hull and Stornaiuolo (2010) to describe this revived interest as a ‘cosmopolitan turn.’ While recognizing this contemporary development, I would add that educators also need to be aware of the neoliberal turn (Bernstein et al., 2015; Block et al., 2012) in education. Such a top-down impulse to globalize education and to create the global citizen is generally motivated by an economic imperative, which is exemplified in this paper by the pragmatic moves initiated by Singapore’s Ministry of Education (Figure 1). To some extent, and given the well-aligned and regulated nature of Singapore’s education system, the call to develop
global citizens did gain traction on the school (Excerpts 1 and 2) and classroom (Excerpts 3 and 4) levels where English was used as a lingua franca. However, as these excerpts also demonstrated, a skewed form of global citizenship, that is one that was premised on economic privilege and sense of superiority, was inadvertently propagated. These constitutions of global citizenship ran counter to the democratic intent of cultivating individuals who are open minded and work actively to build relationships with others.

By contrast, analyses on a group interactional level revealed strong potential for how intercultural communicative competence and the global citizen can be constructed. Put differently, and in keeping with calls to examine ‘globalization from below’ (Appadurai, 1996) and ‘cosmopolitanism from the ground’ (Hansen, 2010), I posit that a bottom-up approach be taken when designing pedagogy to develop the global citizen. As this study has also shown, using ELF alone (as seen in Excerpts 1 through 4) does not necessarily guarantee successful identity development. However, when partnered with an agenda to foster intercultural competence, the use of ELF in conjunction with strategic identity making can yield productive results.

Teaching communication strategies such as asking for clarification of meaning and avoiding culturally specific expressions (Dewey, 2012) would be good pedagogical start. Moving forward, emphasis can also be given to developing greater understanding of non-verbal communication to reduce cultural misunderstanding and to build bonds of solidarity. Further, teaching materials can be enhanced in ways to “portray a multicultural and multifaceted world which more and more is becoming ‘glocally’ interconnected through language” (Bayyurt & Akcan, 2015, p.7). For example, creating interculturally- and ELF-oriented materials may entail comparing and contrasting articles about the same topic or event published in different countries to help students understand conflicting perspectives. At the end of the day, global citizenship education is fundamentally about identity and relationship building through language, or as Norton (2013) astutely put it, about “how a person understands his or her relationship to the world … [and] how that relationship is structured across time and space” (p.45).

References


**Author’s address**

Peter I. De Costa  
Michigan State University  
619 Red Cedar Road  
257 Wells Hall  
East Lansing, MI 48824  
USA  
pdecosta@msu.edu