

Navigating Boundaries through Knowledge: Intercultural Phenomena in ELF Interactions

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates intercultural phenomena in the process of recognizing cultural boundaries in online English as a lingua franca (ELF) video conferencing-based interactions. The recorded interactions between 20 conversational pairs were analyzed by adopting conversation analysis as an analytic framework. The participants' intercultural perspectives are demonstrated through the action sequence of verifying the recipient's knowledge status, informing, and complimenting, which are built by adopting category relevant knowledge of the cultural backgrounds of the recipients. The findings thus suggest that the participants employ knowledge of their own cultural repertoire in exchanges with unfamiliar cultural values as they navigate boundaries based on practical reasoning. More specifically, the participants categorize one another and use their procedural knowledge about familiar cultural practices of their own and the other's country while displaying one's affiliation to the recipients. This study concludes that ELF speakers' experiences of navigating boundaries during first encounters are organized according to the method they use to negotiate and accommodate their cultural affinity, which is significant as it confirms that these practices are shared beyond a particular cultural domain.

Keywords: Intercultural communication, Conversation analysis, Cultural knowledge, Membership categorization, Procedural knowledge

1. INTRODUCTION

This study investigates how so-called 'culture' is talked into being during interaction through English as a lingua franca (ELF). It aims to offer empirical evidence of how participants practically understand what culture is and how their observable and accountable experiences of navigating cultural boundaries are organized by investigating the structure of their interactions and describing conversational practices. In particular, it will explore how cultural knowledge is utilized as a resource for accomplishing various courses of action, which can constitute a larger project of engaging in a topical talk. Thus, in resonance with Baker (2015), as ELF communications are not culturally neutral, 'culture' is only to be understood within an actual communicative event where language and culture are intertwined and various practices and references of cultures converge and become incommensurable. Through the detailed analysis of ELF interactions, this study aims to elucidate how an intercultural communicative event is organized by members for particular cultural practices.

We launched a project (JSPS Kakenhi 18K00753) in which our primary objective was to investigate Japanese students' communication strategies employed in interactions with non-Japanese participants in English, long before video conferencing became prevalent and inevitable in the face of the pandemic (Dimoski et al., 2019). Shortly after we started analyzing our data, it was noticeable that both the Japanese and non-Japanese speakers' treatment of one another's named 'culture' did not appear to be necessarily borderless or beyond cultural boundaries as has been argued in the literature of

transcultural communication through ELF (cf. Baker, 2015; Baker & Sangiamchit, 2019). Namely, our participants did not seem to *move across cultural and linguistic boundaries*, but rather, delineated a boundary around one's own culture while clearly distinguishing the self and the other's cultural domains (cf. Kuroshima, et al, in press). In this regard, their experiences through ELF could be categorized as *intercultural communications* as they illustrate actual instances where cultural and linguistic differences are perceived as relevant to the interaction by participants (Baker, 2015; Baker & Ishikawa, 2021).

It could be argued that the researchers' categorization or conceptualization of the participants' interactional experience of different cultures is not essential for understanding the participants' accountable and observable conduct (Garfinkel, 1967; Sacks, 1963). If the participants utilize their knowledge of their own culture and their recipient's in the interaction methodically, we, as members of society, should also be able to account for what kind of logical connections are seen as a basis for the use of cultural references by consequence of "the mastery of natural language" (Garfinkel & Sacks, 1972, p. 163). This approach will provide a framework for learning how people understand and conceptualize culture as a way to demonstrate knowing how to use cultural knowledge, rather than knowing of cultural objects, in mundane activities in ELF communications (cf. Ryle, 1949).

For the analysis of an interaction, instead of starting with the static view that assumes any communicative event of ELF can be culturally organized, it is most important and relevant to describe the participants' orientations to their interactional context for certain procedures and their consequences to the ways in which they communicate with one another (Nishizaka, 1999; Schegloff, 1991). Indeed, in most cases our participants display their sensitivity to the context of their encounter – namely, meeting for the first time for the purpose of research – which could explain why the types of activities they engaged in are somewhat limited, eliciting numerous autobiographical disclosures such as where they live, what they do, and other largely category relevant questions (e.g., university major), as documented in Maynard and Zimmerman's (1984)¹ study on monolingual unacquainted dyads. Based on this understanding, such types of interactions appear to have a particular organization even when conducted in their lingua franca and therefore merits a specific investigation.

Many previous studies have conceptualized how interaction in ELF is utilized as an opportunity where participants move across cultural and linguistic boundaries, and thereby cultural and linguistic boundaries become transcended and transgressed (Baker, 2015; Baker & Sangiamchit, 2019; Baker & Ishikawa, 2021). The example exchanges used in these transculturality studies (including online text-based communication) are mainly between acquaintances, and thus, more intimate than the case of our participants. Few studies have identified and described the conversational practices that speakers utilize when they have a 'border-crossing, transcultural experience' or elucidated the mechanism for such practices observed in these interactions. We feel that

1. In their experimental study, two unacquainted participants were invited to a debate. They were also requested to become acquainted with each other prior to the debate. At that stage, the unacquainted pairs were often engaged in category relevant questioning that depended on common interpersonal knowledge, so they both could identify themselves regarding who they are, what they do, etc., which could be used as a measure to construct an intimate or distant social relationship.

a transcultural experience is an interactional event by definition, and thus, it is crucial as researchers of ELF to investigate how transculturality is talked into being in actual ELF communication based on the participants' different orientations. Current ELF literature on transculturality seems to lack empirical evidence on how cultural references or transcultural practices in this regard are organized and significantly used *in situ* as resources in order to meet participants' practical needs for the interactive activity at hand. Thus, our aim is to investigate phenomena involving cultural references and/or beliefs in communication via ELF to examine how transculturality (or interculturality) is achieved as a byproduct of adopting particular practical methods for concerted actions.

2. BACKGROUND

Transculturalism stems from the concept of culturalism but goes beyond cultural studies to extend to multiple disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, and global studies, among others. Moreover, the notion of transculturalism emerges from postmodern and poststructural perspectives in that "culture is formed in language so it too is transitory, unstable, and dynamic" (Lewis, 2002, p. 16). However, in this study, we narrow our framework to interculturality and intercultural communication, which emphasizes culture's dynamic nature of participants' immortal and constant alternation and negotiation of practices in communications (Baker, 2015; Ishikawa & Baker, 2021). This view is fairly contrastive with what Hall (1976) explains about culture and communication; that is, cultures are unified wholes in which everything interrelates, which is primarily a system for creating, sending, storing, and processing information. Most importantly, communication underlies everything. To this date, many research disciplines have focused on the interrelationship between culture and communication, and it has gained much attention to examine them from various perspectives and most recently from the research field of ELF (Baker, 2018).

Especially relevant to the current investigation is that, within the research field of English as a (multi-)lingua franca (EMF), the globalized role of English for communication beyond the geographic and national boundaries of participants has led to several claims regarding the relevance of ELF communication to cultures and implications for pedagogy (Baker & Ishikawa, 2021). For instance, Baker and Ishikawa (2021) claim that transcultural communication propagates through global Englishes by considering how English functions as a lingua franca in multilingual scenarios alongside other languages in a wide variety of global settings, and the fluid and dynamic links between English, other languages, and cultural identities and references. Also, in describing the written exchanges on Facebook between close friends, Baker and Sangiamchit (2019) characterize transcultural communication as "communication where interactants move through and across, rather than in-between, cultural and linguistic boundaries, thus, 'named' languages and cultures can no longer be taken for granted and in the process borders become blurred, transgressed and transcended" (p. 2). Although Baker (2015, 2018) claims in several of his writings that it is important to observe how people construct and negotiate meaning in intercultural communication, what appears to be lacking is general knowledge informed by analysis of what a "trans-" or "inter-"

aspect of cultural practice means for the participants, rather than conceptualization of their engaging in each other's cultural practices from the analysts' point of view. It is critical that we investigate actual instances where cultural and linguistic differences are perceived by participants as relevant to the interaction. In particular, our study will show that participants do not seem to move across cultural and linguistic boundaries, but rather, delineate their perceived boundary of one's culture and make a clear distinction between the self and the other's cultural domains. Such observations greatly resonate with studies on interculturality conducted through conversation analysis. For instance, Mori (2003) observed the interactions in first encounters between Japanese and American students in a casual conversational Japanese space, where Japanese was promoted to be used as a *lingua franca*. Based on the claim by Maynard & Zimmerman (1984) that participants during a first encounter orient to building their relationship by asking questions regarding the categorization of the interlocutors, Mori's (2003) study has demonstrated how the participants create and enact the interculturality (and make it irrelevant in some cases) by utilizing the category of who they are as a resource to initiate and respond to various social actions. In this way, Mori (2003) has shown how interculturality is not a given and static fact that is always relevant to the management of their interaction, but rather, a much more contingent and emergent process which participants conduct and construct through interactions (also see Nishizaka, 1995, 1999 for a discussion of how to treat the notion of interculturality).

In this study, we present a conversation analysis (Sacks, 1992) of first encounter interactions in ELF from inter- and/or trans-cultural perspectives, which has virtually no preceding studies. Thus, our research focus is to examine how interaction in ELF, which is intercultural by definition (Baker, 2018), is exactly organized and realized by a sequence of actions (Schegloff, 2007) and to demonstrate the participants' orientation and perspective to the local interactional context in which they reside. By describing the action formation and the sequence of the actions for the exchange on cultural matters, this study attempts to identify how participants (in the same way as the investigators are also able to) conceptualize and recognize each other's beliefs and perspectives towards cultural objects and practices and experiences of navigating the borders. By the term "navigating the borders", we mean to describe the participants' lived experience of raising cultural awareness by addressing each other's inferable knowledge statuses. In the analyses, we will analyze how participants display their specific orientation to the categorization of people in discussing cultural backgrounds and their expected rights and responsibilities with respect to the categorization, which emerges when implementing a course of specific social action (cf. Heritage & Raymond, 2005).

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Participants

The researchers recruited student participants from their own university and foreign participants based on the researchers' personal connections. The participants in this study consisted of 36 participants, Japanese students ($n=18$) studying at a private university in Japan and overseas participants ($n=19$) of various cultural backgrounds

(i.e., Brazil, China, Macedonia, Malaysia, Mexico, the Philippines, Taiwan, and Thailand), for whom English was not their native language. The majority of Japanese participants were either first or second-year students studying various majors, who self-reported their English proficiency as either elementary or beginner-level. Only a small number were graduate students ($n=2$) in English Education majors, who identified their English language proficiency as intermediate or upper-intermediate. The overseas participants, on the other hand, had much higher proficiency as all of them were capable of having a conversation in English as a medium language without any difficulties. Their background such as age, occupation, country of residence, and first language varied. We did not consider any factors when selecting the pairs. It was rather based on their availability to schedule a meeting.

3.2. Procedure

Japanese university students were randomly paired with their foreign interlocutors and engaged in online conversations via Zoom prior to the pandemic period. Their interactions were video-recorded and transcribed for later analysis. In total, 20 interactions (in which a few of the participants participated twice) with approximately 400 minutes of recorded data were collected and analyzed. Prior to each interaction, participants were instructed to have a casual conversation with their interlocutor on any topic they desired for approximately 20 minutes. We did not specify the language they can use. To help prompt discussion, the Japanese participants were also provided with (an optional) short list of generic questions to ask their foreign interlocutors if they wished (see Appendix A). Post-conversation interviews were also individually conducted after each session by the researchers to gain insights into the participants' thoughts about engaging in such interactions (see Appendix B).

In accordance with university ethical guidelines for research, we explained the purpose of study as investigation of communication strategies in ELF interactions and consent forms were provided and signed by all the participants.

3.3. Methodology: Conversation Analysis

We identified the relevant segments after examining the data. By “relevant” we mean that a participant's knowledge about one's own and the partner's culture is used as a resource to construct concerted actions. By looking at the sequence organization of a course of action closely, we describe the conversational practices. After making a collection of data, we transcribed the segments using the transcript convention (see Appendix C) developed by Jefferson (2004) as well as bodily movements where relevant to the ongoing interaction using the multimodal transcription system developed by Mondada (2019) and analyzed each segment in detail using conversation analysis (Sacks, 1992; Schegloff, 2007). Names of the participants in the transcripts were changed with pseudonyms.

4. ANALYSIS

4.1. Verifying the Relative Knowledge Status via Making a Categorical Distinction

Often, cultural material, products, or entities, such as Japanese anime or student lifestyles, are referenced in ELF interactions. In conversation, they are usually treated as one's knowledge, which assumes ownership and entitles someone with a primary right and responsibility to know depending on the relevant identity in a particular interaction (Heritage & Raymond, 2005; Raymond & Heritage, 2006). Because of this understanding of whose domain of knowledge a cultural entity should belong to and who should have the primary right to the domain of knowledge, references to cultural objects have a certain accountability when introduced into the ongoing interaction. In Excerpt 1 below, a Brazilian participant Teo (TEO), who is a graduate student and once lived in Japan as an exchange student, and a Japanese participant Ken (KEN), are talking about their daily routine (the researcher also comes in at the end of this exchange). When Teo tells Ken that he goes to bed at midnight, Ken also says he sleeps at midnight (not shown in the transcript). On the one hand, Teo accounts for going to bed late due to having work, study, or reading to do. On the other hand, Ken says his reason is because he watches movies and anime² in line 9.

Excerpt 1 [Pair#18][20:59]

- 07 KEN: [I::
08 TEO: [ya,
09 KEN: becau::se, I watch, movie::s, and anime?
10 (1.0)
11 TEO: oh::[:: okay.
12 KEN: [uh-
13 KEN: → **do you kno::w <anime?>**
14 (1.2)
15 TEO: ye::s::<[I mean, I d- I don't <watch::,> [anime?
16 KEN: [oh:: [ah:::
17 TEO: but I:: k- I know about it.
18 KEN: ↑ oh:::
19 TEO: I- I jus' only- the only one:: I watched, the only one I know: i::s,
20 *Death Note?*
21 (0.5)
22 KEN: n?
23 *(0.5)
ken *pointing gesture
24 KEN: one more please?=
25 TEO: =d' y' know this? ya, I watched, <one::> jus' one:, [anime?
26 KEN: [u::n.
27 TEO: it's uh::m, called, <Death Note> in English.<I dunno the
28 name in Japan.
29 (.)

2. "Cool Japan," also known as the promotion of 'pop-culture diplomacy in Japan' through media culture stems from the globalized practice of softening anti-Japan viewpoints during the postwar period (Iwabuchi, 2015), hence anime is typically regarded as an example of Japanese pop culture by participants.

30 TEO: [(Japanese),
 31 KEN: [<Death Note?>
 32 TEO: sorry.
 33 (0.2)
 34 TEO: [Death <Note.>
 35 KEN: [Death Note? ↑ oh:::: .hhh
 36 TEO: I think i:t-
 37 KEN: sorry,
 38 TEO: is it anime::::?
 39 KEN: I don't, [about:,
 40 TEO: [(is it anime::::)?
 41 KEN: but, I know:: it.
 42 *(1.0)
 ken *nods several times and starts jotting down something
 44 TEO: yeah.
 45 KEN: °°*de- desu nooto ka.*°°
 46 TEO: yeah. that's the only one:: I know::.
 47 KEN: un.
 48 TEO: hm.
 49 (0.8)
 50 RES: oka::::y,
 51 RES: [hi::::
 52 TEO: [do you like traveling?

When his explanation is received by Teo as noteworthy in line 11, Ken goes on to ask if Teo knows anime in line 13. Given Ken's epistemic status (i.e., a relative access to a particular domain of knowledge; Heritage, 2012a, 2012b) as someone who has claimed to routinely watch anime and attributable ownership of Japanese anime to a category of Japanese people, this question is hearable as checking Teo's genuine knowledgeability of anime, rather than preparation for something else such as a request for information (i.e., "Please teach me") or news announcement ("I watched XXX!") (Schegloff, 2007), thus treating Teo as an unknowing and novice recipient (Goodwin, 1981; Mori, 2003). In this way, anime is understood and presented as the target of a category-relevant activity (i.e., "Japanese people know anime very well") (Sacks, 1972a, 1972b), and thereby Teo is categorized as non-Japanese.

In conveying his response, Teo indeed demonstrates his understanding of Ken's question as such by confirming and later specifying that his knowledge level is somewhat limited as he does not regularly watch anime but "knows about it" (lines 15 and 17). To demonstrate his relative access to the object, Teo tells Ken that he only watched one anime by providing him with the title (lines 19-20). As Ken does not comprehend Teo's explanation immediately, Teo repeats the title several times by again saying that he watched "just one anime", which was Death Note (lines 19-28). When the title is finally received by Ken in line 35, claiming a renewed understanding (Heritage, 1984), Teo further requests confirmation from Ken on whether what he watched can be

counted as anime (lines 38 and 40), thus treating Ken as a more knowledgeable party. After registering the title, Ken first apologizes and accounts for it by saying that he has not watched it but has knowledge about the anime (lines 39 and 41). Through the action of apology, Ken displays his orientation to the epistemic responsibility of someone who claims to know anime but fails to demonstrate, and he is taking responsibility for not fulfilling his expected role (Robinson, 2006). Even though watching anime is not conceptually the same as knowing the anime, as the former refers to an experiential activity and the latter to knowledge status, both Teo and Ken understand that watching presumes the state of knowing but not vice versa. Throughout this exchange, the distinction between a knowing/unknowing state regarding anime between two parties has been maintained and oriented through the constructed sequence of actions, which was based on the categories of Japanese and non-Japanese.

A similar example is seen in other types of questions where one participant asks their interlocutor whether they have experienced being exposed to cultural materials that normatively belong to their own domain (e.g., “Have you ever listened to Bossa Nova?” asked by one Brazilian participant or “Do you read manga?” asked by a Japanese student)³. In these cases, the questions are recognizable as checking the recipient’s knowledgeability since cultural products such as anime, manga, or music presume a category-based ownership which assumes the questioner’s higher epistemic status than the recipient’s – regardless of whether the questioner has in fact personally experienced them or not. Because their interaction is a first-time encounter, they must assume such knowledge status based on the category of the person as commonsensical knowledge (Maynard & Zimmerman, 1984; Sacks, 1972a, 1972b). This category-based knowledge status has certain accountability to what kind of action is being initiated at any given point. As observed in the excerpt, if a questioner is expected to have an ownership of the target of the question while the recipient is not, the question will work to verify the recipient’s knowledge state as part of “getting to know you better”. The recipient is not expected to have the same or higher level of knowledge given his/her membership category as a non-member to the questioner’s category. Hence, the example illustrates how the participants make a distinction or boundary of the domain of cultural knowledge, which is clearly demonstrated by their local production of action sequences.

4.2. Treating the Cultural Product or Entity as One’s Knowledge via Informing

In the previous section, we described one practice where ELF conversationalists treat a named cultural item, such as anime or music, as part of one another’s knowledge domain based on categorization and use it as a basis for asking the recipient to confirm their knowledge status. In other words, they are verifying the interlocutor’s state of knowledge regarding their own domain as unknowing. Similarly, participants can voluntarily introduce their cultural knowledge to the discourse without being solicited. In this section, we are going to examine a sequence of *informing* cultural practice and demonstrate how such a conversational move is made relevant by a local context.

3. With a slightly different orientation, Mori (2003) analyzed this kind of question as a category-activity question based on Maynard & Zimmerman (1984). A category-activity question asks about the typical activity that is bound to a certain category, e.g., asking a learner of the Japanese language whether he has seen Japanese anime.

In Excerpt 2, Christine (CHR), a Chinese graduate student, who is studying at a university in Tokyo, has met for the first time via online with Rin (RIN), a Japanese college student. They discuss various issues and when Rin introduces her sister as a bass guitar player, Christine comments on the fact by giving a positive evaluation in line 1 and starts to account for her positive stance in lines 3 to 7 by saying that she longed to create a band herself. She then tells how she ended up not forming one because she had to study in high school in China (lines 9 to 11). Christine then compares the situation in China with Japan as she demonstrates her knowledge about Japanese high schools in line 14 by referring to a ‘circle’. Here she replaces “I” with “we” to demonstrate that she is referring to the general state of affairs regarding circles (unofficial clubs). *Saakuru* ‘circle’ refers to an interest group for various activities and is not an officially registered club. They include not only sports, arts, music, but also more sub-cultural categories such as anime, comedy (called *owarai* in Japanese), and so on. When Christine explains that they do not have after-school club activities because of their studies (which she demonstrates the excessive and thus problematic aspect of by repeating the word “study” three times), thus clearly making a comparison between China and Japan in lines 19 and 21, Rin voluntarily provides information about Japanese high school students’ club activities in lines 24 and 26 to confirm Christine’s perspective.

Excerpt 2 [Pair# 20][22:19]

- 01 CHR: I think she is very cool.
 02 RIN: coo(h)::l_?
 03 CHR: ye::s. ‘cauz, I- I really want to:: uh:m, (0.2) uhm,
 04 (0.2) >how do you say,< create a ba:nd_
 05 RIN: hm-[hm.
 06 CHR: [for myself? (0.2) an’ I- I love singing,
 07 (0.4) back in high school?
 08 RIN: [hm.
 09 CHR: [but I: >I mean,< I think Japan i::s the same. I mean in China,
 10 in high school, students are just studying, studying and
 11 [studying.
 12 RIN: [Mm-hm.
 13 RIN: nn, yes.
 14 CHR: yes, I- I- uh we don’t have, we don’t really have uh: uhm:, circles_
 15 RIN: Uh-huh? (0.2) [Really?
 16 CHR: [uh-huh.
 17 CHR: Hmm...We don’t have them, .hhh
 18 RIN: hm::
 19 CHR: a::n’ we don’t have any, uhm:: after-school activities_
 20 RIN: Um-hm?
 21 CHR: °I thin’° un:: it’s just study, study, study.
 22 (0.5)
 23 CHR: un.
 24 RIN: → Most o::f, the high school student:, join:: a club.

25 (0.2)
 26 RIN: → In [Japan.
 27 CHR: [hm-hm.
 28 (0.5)
 29 CHR: Ye::s, I:- I think it's very great.
 30 RIN: yea[h::
 31 CHR: [It's a really great thin': and uhm, (0.2)
 32 I: I li- I like thu:h, (0.5)
 33 the boys? who pla::y su- circles?
 34 RIN: nn-hm.
 35 CHR: uh-hm. I- I think they are very cool.
 36 RIN: nn. yes::.
 37 CHR: (a:n' uh) play sports?
 38 RIN: nn-hm.
 39 CHR: uh-hm, uh-hm.

Although Christine does not treat this piece of information provided by Rin as new to her in line 29, she displays her having access to it through assessing it (Pomerantz, 1984). Even though such information is not sought for by the co-participant, Rin presents it as something noteworthy to mention in the current discourse as they are discussing club activities in China, which is why Christine appreciates the information by giving a positive assessment (lines 29 to 37). In other words, club activities for high school students are regarded as a target of knowledge by both participants. They literally exchange information about each country's school activities through several sequences of informing actions. It is notable that these participants make a clear distinction between the two cultures; namely, China and Japan, appraising school practices through the initiation of informing and receiving action as is. As such, Rin demonstrates her understanding of what Christina is accomplishing by providing information about the situation of high school students in China; thereby, she also voluntarily provides the same type of information as it can be understood to be outside of the recipient's domain of knowledge. The next excerpt also illustrates a similar phenomenon.

In the following excerpt, a Taiwanese company employee, John (JOH), is conversing with a Japanese college student, Saki (SAK). Prior to this segment, they are talking about how they spent New Year's Day and the customary way of celebrating it in each country. When the talk comes to an end, Saki asks John about how people normally spend Christmas in Taiwan in lines 1 and 2. After John responds to this question in lines 6 to 22 in regards to Taiwanese people (notice he uses the inclusive 'we' when explaining), the sequence could have been completed there. It is at this position that Saki talks about the Japanese way of spending Christmas, which is by eating cake in lines 27 and 28. Her turn of telling "my (our)" side is voluntarily initiated without being requested by John. Thus, we can observe a similar phenomenon of the speaker initiating a new course of "telling my side" (i.e., informing of what the speaker knows as a subject-actor who has rights and obligations to know) by self-selecting to speak next (cf. Pomerantz, 1980).

Excerpt 3 [Pair# 6][23:37]

01 SAK: ah:: Christmas? in- what do you:- (.) do
 02 in Chris- Christmas, on Chris[tmas?
 03 JOH: [Christmas?
 04 (0.8)
 05 SAK: yes:
 06 JOH: uhm::: In my:::, (0.5) in:: (1.5) We will cosplay something::
 07 [to::
 08 SAK: [ya,
 09 JOH: with my friend:::,
 10 (0.5)
 11 SAK: nn::
 12 JOH: and the::n, go to KDB?
 13 SAK: ¥ KDB? ¥
 14 JOH: yeah:: e- e- em everyone: co::s something, somebody,
 15 (1.0)
 16 JOH: maybe a cartoon:::,
 17 SAK: hm-hm.
 18 JOH: character:::, anything, you can:::, imagine.
 19 (1.5) ((SAK nods))
 20 JOH: ya. ha ha, .shh and the::n we:: sing:: (.) an' we::
 21 (1.0) ((JOH sniffs))
 22 JOH: we playin' together.
 23 SAK : nn:: [nice!
 24 JOH: [yeah.
 25 (0.5)
 26 JOH: ah huh huh huh
 27 SAK: → e! (.) ah::: In Japan, almost people e::at cake? i:n Christmas?
 28 → on: Christmas? Cake.
 29 (1.0)((SAK uses hand gestures of a cake))
 30 JOH: Cake? I got it.
 31 SAK: eh, do you:: are you:: n? do you eat, (0.5) cake on Christmas?
 32 (0.2)
 33 JOH: Cake? ah:: Nah::: hhh. .shh No:: we don't ha::ve.
 34 SAK: ↑ eh:::
 35 JOH: no::: I don't like uh:: sna::ck.
 36 (0.5)
 37 SAK: [huhhuh
 38 JOH: [nothin' huhhuhhuh .hh

After John registers this piece of information in line 30, Saki asks if they have a similar practice of eating cake on Christmas day (line 31). In response, John denies her assumption by referring to “we” to demonstrate his understanding that the question is about the Taiwanese people. For both of them, eating a cake on Christmas is part of the

cultural practice, which assumes the categorization of the other as non-Japanese is based on their nationality.

In both excerpts, the Japanese participants refer to their own cultural practice by explicitly contrasting it with the interlocutor's case. They achieve this by referring to the situation "in Japan". When the interlocutor talks about their own cultural domain of knowledge as something the recipient does not have, he or she also reciprocates and informs the recipient of their own domain of knowledge by referencing to their country name. This action of informing after receiving the other person's cultural knowledge has a certain accountability in terms of reciprocity of information for the first encounters. In this way, they are treating the information as something that does not belong to the domain of the interlocutors.

Again, because they are meeting for the first time, the normative orientation to such an encounter is to appropriately assume the other person does not know well about the speaker's cultural domain. In such cases, participants provide information about cultural practices to the interlocutors as something noteworthy by again treating the recipients as unknowing recipients. Akin to the previous examples of checking the other person's knowledge, the speakers are clearly differentiating who has the primary rights to talk about and the obligations to be knowledgeable about the cultural materials.

This type of treatment of cultural knowledge is a recurrent phenomenon in our data corpus, confirming our claim that participants are concerned with who has primary knowledge and whose domain the items in question belong to. Congruently, they present the information regarding their own culture normally as something that does not belong to the recipients, creating a clear boundary between a knowing and unknowing participant in this regard. We observed cultural items or practices that tend to orient in this way, which is in contrast with the 'trans-'cultural borderless experience reported in the literature, with a clear delineation as to who has the primary right to the culture. We should also note that such understanding of named culture is only possible through detailed turn-by-turn analyses in talk-in-interaction. Of course, the participants may adopt other explicit methods such as requests for information about the other person's culture (e.g., "Please tell me, what do you think is the most difficult thing in a student's life in Japan?") indicating that the speaker lacks the target knowledge of the interlocutor's domain (Heritage, 2012a). What we have observed in this section is more tacit than explicit seeking of information in terms of their epistemic stance display towards the relative knowledge status; that is, by treating the recipient as less knowledgeable relative to the speaker via the action of informing the other, they display their understanding of who has the epistemic primacy regarding cultural knowledge.

4.3. Insider/Outsider Categories Regarding the Cultural Domain as a Resource to Praise the Other

We have demonstrated in the previous sections how participants orient to their relative knowledge state based on the epistemic primacy and ownership of the target knowledge in constructing a social action, such as checking the recipient's knowledge state or informing the recipient with one's own cultural knowledge. In this last section, we will consolidate this claim by further demonstrating that such

In Excerpt 4, a Filipino speaker, Mike (MIK), explains how he has visited Japan several times and likes it very much to a Japanese graduate student, Shiro (SHI). Prior to this segment, Mike has just mentioned how much he appreciates Japanese food. When the talk about food comes to a visible end, Shiro elicits another opinion from Mike in line 2, this time regarding other so-called soft power culture, movies and animation. Mike responds favorably and starts to explain his appreciation of a Japanese movie maker in line 4. He names Studio Ghibli as an “assessable name” (Goodwin, 2003) to show his appreciation of their work and, at the same time, to demonstrate that he has particular knowledge about Japanese movies.

01 (5.0)
02 SHI: How about::, uhm:, (0.2) movies, or:: (0.2) animation.
03 (0.8)
04 MIK: Oh yeah, very much.<oh I like uh:: Ghibli?
05 SHI: oh Jibu[ri
06 MIK: [an::' yeah. <a::nd,> uh:: so::me movies, uh:: th- what was
07 this last uh:: >Jap-Japanese movie that I saw<, "Okuribito?"
08 (.)
09 MIK: It's jus' an old one, right?
10 (0.8) ((F nods and T nods))
11 SHI: yea:[:h.
12 MIK: [ya. (0.2) Mm-hm.
13 SHI: → **You know it.**
14 MIK: Yeah:, s(h)o:: hh hh I have uh:- I have uh seen a few by uh:::
15 Nobu Asano:::
16 SHI: Mm-[hm.
17 MIK: [uh:: ya, so, uh: I like, Japanese cinema too.
18 SHI: → **wow.**
19 MIK: yeah.
20 SHI: → **ny:: eh huh**
21 MIK: h(hhh)a::[ve you seen Filipino movies?
22 SHI: → [¥ **yabai (na).** ¥
'Too good to be true'

95

response by giving additional information about another topic-worthy item, in this case a specific movie title (*Okuribito*), to demonstrate his knowledge about Japanese movies (lines 6 and 7). Then, Mike requests confirmation about the movie from Shiro even though Shiro has not claimed any prior knowledge about this movie in line 9; thereby, treating Shiro as someone who is more knowledgeable than Mike regarding this item. After that is confirmed, Shiro explicitly acknowledges Mike's knowledge state in line 13 as a way to compliment him. Such acknowledgment of the recipient's knowledge state (i.e., knowing in this case) is accountable by treating Mike as an outsider to the cultural domain, and thus, acknowledging the recipient's claimed knowledge as an outsider. In other words, this kind of acknowledgment will not work as an appraisal if the recipient is someone who is an insider of this domain (i.e., a Japanese person). Given this, Mike further demonstrates his knowledge by naming a famous movie actor in line 14. Subsequently, Mike displays his appreciation of Japanese movies again as a way to conclude his demonstration of his knowledge states (line 16). Next, as a relevant response to such displayed knowledge presumed to be outside of his domain, Shiro indeed claims that it was unexpected in line 17. By further demonstrating his astonishment in Japanese in line 21 ("yabai na" 'too good to be true'), he not only admires Mike's knowledge but also admits that could potentially jeopardize his status as an insider as his knowledge status is implied to be lower than expected; thus, he treats it as an uneasy, undesirable situation. His laughter (indicated by 'eh huh') in line 19 and embarrassed smiley voice in line 21 (indicated by ¥ symbol) also display that accepting the fact that his interlocutor knows better about his expected own domain of cultural knowledge than him is problematic and needs resistance to admitting it (Jefferson, 1984).

In this excerpt, rather than being simply referenced, the participant's knowledge about a soft power item, like a movie of the other person's domain, is treated as a particular interest and appraisable object. The construction of compliment action is only accountable if we consider the participants' understanding of categorization work; for instance, on one hand, foreign people are not expected to know much about Japanese movies, and on the other hand, Japanese people have obligations to know a lot about Japanese movies, and so forth (Sacks, 1972b). In this way, the expectancy regarding knowledge about an item belonging to a certain cultural domain is based on the assumption of an insider/outsider relation to it. For example, if Mike was a movie maker, and so regarded as an expert on movies in general, this kind of appraisal would not proceed in the same way, instead of being based on the categorization of Mike as an outsider rather than an expert.

5. DISCUSSION

Recent publications on the conceptualization of the relationship between cultural and language practices in ELF interactions have extended and enriched our understanding of the intricate and multitudinal nature of ELF participants' experiences and the importance of not taking the cultural boundaries and stereotypical assumptions for granted (Baker, 2015, 2018; Baker & Ishikawa, 2021). Contrary to such a methodological policy,

our study has demonstrated a member's demonstration of their distinction via an awareness and assumption of who accountably has the primary cultural knowledge through categorization practices based on their cultural background in order to build and advance their interaction. Whether it is through (a) verifying the recipient's access to a particular domain of culture, (b) informing by assuming the recipient's status as unknowing, or (c) complimenting by acknowledging the recipient's knowledge status as higher than supposed, the participants in our dataset all display their understanding of and orientation to one another's cultural knowledge by reference to the category-bound activity of knowing/not knowing relevant to their expected identity.

As Mori (2003) has convincingly shown, and also observed and described in our study, the general knowledge and understanding about one another's cultural knowledge – whether stereotypical or not – is essentially normative and, therefore, can be a resource for unacquainted ELF participants to partake in exchange. Such practices of conversation indeed demonstrates that cultural knowledge and normative expectations to it are indeed shared beyond the boundary of a named cultural domain and, thus, we can observe it as procedural knowledge about how to use our common sensical categorical knowledge (Garfinkel, 1967; Sacks, 1972a, 1972b). Akin to the findings of Maynard and Zimmerman (1984) on monolingual interactions, ELF parties in first encounters display their affiliative orientation rather than hostility or disinterest to each other, attempting to generate a topical talk via bids to confirm assumptions and questions based on one's practical reasoning about the other's cultural background and their category relevant knowledge status. The empirical evidence of navigating the borders of knowledge domains in ELF interactions is thus a manifestation of the participant's orientation to the first encounter, where both parties do not share any personal histories between them but rely on the practical knowledge about how to interact with someone whom you have met for the first time, such as using the categorical assumption about one another's knowledge status. It thus results in a very different outcome from a border crossing and transcending *transcultural* experience. However, as demonstrably shown in our data analyses, the observed participants' interactional capability of producing a concerted action via various practices confirms that, rather than their proficiency level, their awareness or understanding of cultural differences in effect drives the sequence in the way reported here; namely, asking and telling about their (un-)knowledgeability regarding one's own and the other's culture by acknowledging their relative knowledge status.

As stated in a post-conversation interview (see Appendix C for interview questions) by one of the foreign participants, knowing the cultural item of a conversational topic contributes to the conversation, while not knowing impedes it. This commentary demonstrably supports our claim that shared knowledge and understanding of a named culture can be a reasonable resource to navigate cultural boundaries in ELF. Through the analyses of conversational practices, we were able to offer empirical evidence where intercultural awareness emerges via participants' orientation and sensitivity to each other's domain of cultural knowledge, and as a matter of fact, how to use the knowledge is shared among interlocutors, bringing to fore who has the primary rights and responsibilities to discuss one's own culture, and that knowledge itself indeed

transcends the cultural boundaries.

Finally, our study highlights the potential importance of raising learners' understanding of and one's own culture from a global perspective in the ELF-aware classroom (cf. Sato et al., 2019). Furthermore, it is suggested that daily exercise of using one's cultural knowledge in conversation with partners as a resource could help learners utilize such knowledge to build and maintain conversations. This can be easily implemented, for example, by providing and examining an ELF scenario in which two people with different nationalities discuss aspects of their cultures, such as the ways they spend New Year's Day. As ELF-aware teachers, it is critical to understand what the users of ELF are capable of at any moment of their interaction, and thus, we would like to propose to look at their interactions based not on fluency or linguistic ability, but on the lived experience of using the cultural knowledge for their practical purposes (Garfinkel, 1967).

6. CONCLUSION

Using conversational practices based on one's understanding of their relative cultural knowledge, the participants in our data proceeded to become acquainted with the other's culture, a process presupposing a delineation of cultural domains. Our findings further suggest that the emerging property of intercultural phenomenon in ELF communication discussed in the literature can be demonstrated through the participants' shared and general knowledge and their displayed orientation to the ownership and domain of relative knowledge based on cultural background. For instance, we were able to show that saliency and/or expectancy of knowing one's own culture is associated with membership categories such as nationality (e.g., Japanese, Chinese, Brazilian, etc.) from their ELF communication (Sacks, 1972a, 1972b). In return, we hope this study will contribute to the growing body of knowledge on transculturality in ELF communication in addition to interculturality; namely, the process of going beyond cultural boundaries to build relationships with one another in non-instructional settings.

Although the lower proficiency level of the Japanese participants in this study may have been a contributing factor for the frequent one-way communications observed, and considering that the age range of the foreign speakers was wider than the Japanese interlocutors, the procedural method to utilize one's general knowledge of culture as a resource to build a sequence of actions, which we described, is within scope of the claims in this current investigation and significantly evident that the categorization based on cultural background is more salient than other potentially relevant categories, such as an office worker/student.

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APPENDIX A

List of optional conversational prompt questions provided for Japanese participants

You can talk about these following topics:

- 1) Where are you from?
- 2) What time is it there now? What is the weather like?
- 2.a) What are you studying? What is your major? What year/level are you in?
- 2.b) What is your job? What do you do? How long have you worked there?
- 3.a) What is your university like? OR
- 3.b) What is your company like?
- 5) Do you have any hobbies? What do you do in your free time?
- 6) What food do you like? What local food do you recommend?
- 7) Which place would you like to visit for vacation and why?
- 8) How do people in your country celebrate Christmas or New Year?

Other Possible Topics

- Culture: Holidays, Customs
- Social Issues (Problems/Solutions): Social media, Bullying/Cyber bullying, Game/Smartphone/Technology addiction, Public transportation, Cost of living
- Education: College, Entrance exams, Social gap/academic gap
- Tourism Famous places, Vacations
- Pop Cultures: Music/Movies, Famous persons of your partner's country
- Demographics: Population, Weather, School facts, Country facts (Ethnicity, Religions, Languages)

APPENDIX B

Semi-structured post-interview questions

1. How would you rate the video and audio quality of the online software used (i.e., Zoom)?

(Not satisfied) 1 2 3 4 5 (Satisfied)

2. Are you satisfied with the outcomes of your conversation?

(Not satisfied) 1 2 3 4 5 (Satisfied)

3. How would you rate the level of difficulty of the speaking task?

(Easy) 1 2 3 4 5 (Difficult)

4. How would you rate your speaking partner's proficiency in spoken English?

(Basic) 1 2 3 4 5 (Advanced)

5. Did any part of your conversation go particularly well?

Yes/No Please explain.

6. Did you experience difficulties during the conversation?

Yes/No Please explain.

7. Would you want to do anything to improve the conversation next time?

Yes/No Please explain.

8.a. Please recall your conversation (with the other speaker) and judge your own communication ability. On a scale of 1-7, how would you rate your own communication ability during the conversation?

(Poor) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (Excellent)

8.b. Please describe any aspects of your own communication ability that affected your rating. It doesn't have to be related to your English. You can describe whatever you want.

9.a. Please recall your conversation (with the other speaker) and judge his/her communication ability. On a scale of 1-7, how would you rate his/her communication ability during the conversation?

(Poor) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (Excellent)

9.b. Please describe any aspects of his/her communication ability that affected your rating. It doesn't have to be related to his/her English. You can describe whatever you want.

10. Did you experience any transcultural exchange of information or values?

Yes/No. If yes, please give some examples.

11. Do you have any questions, comments, or suggestions?

APPENDIX C

Transcript conventions developed by Gail Jefferson (2004)

.	pitch fall
?	pitch rise
,	level pitch
??	marked pitch movement
—	underscoring indicates some form of stress
"_"	truncation
[]	overlap
=	latching of turns
(0.5)	pause (length in tenths of a second)
(.)	micropause
:	lengthening of a sound
°word°	portions quieter than the surrounding talk
hhh	audible out-breath
.hhh	audible in-breath
(h)	within-speech aspiration, usually indicating laughter
#	creaky voice quality
¥	smiley voice quality
<word>	slow speech rate
>word<	fast speech rate

Multimodal transcript conventions developed by Lorenza Mondada (2019)

* *	Descriptions of embodied movements are delimited between
+ +	two identical symbols (one symbol per participant's line of action) and
	are synchronized with corresponding stretches of talk/lapses of time.
*-->	The action described continues across subsequent lines
-->*	until the same symbol is reached.
>>	The action described begins before the extract's beginning.
-->>	The action described continues after the extract's end.
. . . .	Preparation.
-----	Full extension of the movement is reached and maintained.
,,,,,	Retraction.
ava	Participant doing the embodied action is identified when (s)he is not the speaker.