I. Introduction

In this paper, I will discuss the significance of the concept of English as an International Language (EIL) with an overview of the features of EIL education, followed by a presentation of my own pedagogical practice in teaching EIL.

The basic philosophy of EIL is an idea that users of English may free themselves from the norms of its native speakers when approximation to Anglo-American English has traditionally been taken for granted as the goal for the learning of English. While many scholars emphasize the global spread of English as a premise for this stance, the chance for deliverance from native speaker norms could be sought in the learning of any language. In the teaching of Japanese, for example, Japanese values should not be imposed upon the learners of the language. In fact, the late David G. Goodman, an American professor who was well known as an essay writer in Japanese, noted, “My act of writing in Japanese... has nothing to do with ‘Japan.’” (Goodman 54. Translation mine). He went on to define his use of the language as “Japanese as a means of expressing myself” (54. Translation mine). Although the theory of EIL is often considered to be founded on the special sociolinguistic status of English, it should actually be applicable to any other language in many respects.

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II. Foundations of EIL

1. The definition of EIL

While there are several schools of thought in this field of discipline today, the concept of EIL in the present paper chiefly draws upon my own stance (Hino 2001, 2009, 2012a, 2012c), developed initially on a reinterpretation of Smith (1976, 1978, 1981). EIL is defined here as English when used as a means of international communication. A strength of this definition lies in its dynamic nature as a situationally-based definition, which is different from a static concept such as “English as a World Language” that could run the risk of treating English as a specially privileged language. On the other hand, it should also be noted that this definition still has its weaknesses, including its dependence on the traditional nation-state framework.

2. Three paradigms of international English

Starting with Halliday, McIntosh, and Strevens (1964), various ideas and concepts have been proposed on the global de-Anglo-Americanization of English. At present, three major paradigms are identified, each of which may be viewed as constituting an independent school of thought, namely, EIL (English as an International Language), WE (World Englishes), and ELF (English as a Lingua Franca).

EIL, a concept originally proposed by Smith (1976, 1978, 1981), refers to English as a means of international communication. WE, a theory established by Kachru (1976, 1985, 1986, 1997), has been dominantly influential for the past three decades with its emphasis on the intra-national use of postcolonial Englishes. ELF (English a Lingua Franca), the most recent movement represented by works such as Jenkins (2000, 2007), Seidlhofer (2011), and Mauranen (2012), focuses on communication between non-native speakers. I employ the term EIL since Smith’s papers have been my initial inspiration, while also receiving various input from the other two paradigms.

3. Three interpretations on the form of international English

There are three different interpretations on the form of international English that has gone beyond the Anglo-American framework. The most dominant view among scholars in this field thus far is that international English consists of a diversity of Englishes, which are usually classified