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ELF in MUN Negotiations:
Problematizing the Native Speaker of English

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ABSTRACT

MUN (Model United Nations) simulations and ELF (English Lingua Franca) interactions can both be considered communities of practice since they embody Wenger's (1998) three criteria—mutual engagement, a negotiated joint enterprise, and a shared repertoire. As has been noted in previous research (Tatsuki, 2017; forthcoming) merely speaking English as an L1 offers no guarantee of an ability to interact successfully with a wide variety of interlocutors; there are many varieties of English, many of which are mutually incomprehensible (Ur, 2010) and similarly, native speakers of these many varieties of English are not guaranteed to be successful interlocutors with users of ELF (Litzenberg, 2013). This paper points out some of the shortcomings that native speakers display when communicating with ELF speakers in the context of MUN simulations and offers suggestions/teaching materials for native speaker sensitivity-training as well as strategies for ELF users to cope with native speaker initiated communication problems and break-downs.

Keywords: English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) MUN simulations
negotiation community of practice

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1. Introduction

Model United Nations (MUN) simulations are opportunities for student delegates to develop skill and practice using a number of different interactional genres, such as timed, formal speeches to summarize policy positions or appeal to others, caucusing by engaging in face-to-face negotiation in order to find allies, persuade adversaries and promote cooperation, as well as procedural gambits like making motions or calling for points of order as a means to shape the direction of the meeting itself. The research reported on in this chapter will summarize my ongoing research into MUN interactions involving ELF (English as a Lingua Franca) users and Native Speakers of English. The study will consider the sources of interaction and comprehension difficulties experienced by ELF users during MUN events and will close with some practical suggestions for action.

2. Background to the Research

Although the connections between MUN and ELF have been summarized and discussed elsewhere (Tatsuki, 2017; forthcoming), a short explanation of the ways in which MUN events display the characteristics of a community of practice and how this intersects with an ELF community of practice is worth repeating.

2.1 Understanding MUN simulations

MUN simulations bring together participants (delegates) to consider and do research on a particular set of world problems in order to produce solutions called resolutions/action plans. Before the simulation, there are two kinds of preparation required: 1) research, 2) interactional practice. In both cases there are specific behaviors/norms that the would-be delegates are expected to master. For instance, the delegates must research their country's policies with regard to the topic/agenda at hand and then come up with solutions to the problems defined, which are presented in in a concise, technically stylized Position Paper, later used as a starting point for the face-to-face negotiations at the MUN event. Interactional practice is accomplished in conjunction with team-building exercises with other delegates who are representing the same country in different committees. The sharing of information ensures that the research is well understood and also provides opportunities for delegates to try to express all the ideas in their position papers verbally and spontaneously. This increases the ability to speak about the issues fluently and spontaneously. Also, the interactional practice familiarizes the delegates with meeting procedures (making motions, voting, etc.) that are important ways for the delegates to exert influence on the direction of the meeting. All interactional and preparatory aspects of MUN simulations hold great potential interest to researchers in communication and interaction, particularly in the ELF research world.

2.2 MUN and ELF as Communities of Practice

Both MUN simulations and ELF interactions possess three criteria that according to Wenger (1998), characterize a community of practice—mutual engagement, a negotiated joint enterprise, and a shared repertoire. The diversity inherent in ELF communication also encourages accommodation, negotiation and cooperation—ideally, these are also the features of successful MUN interactions. The complication in MUN simulations is that not all the participants/delegates identify as ELF users. Also, when one considers the slipperiness and inadequacy of the term "native speaker" to describe a person's communicative competence it is hard to use that label. Jenkins (2000) attempts to reimagine the native non-native dichotomy by suggesting concepts like Monolingual English Speaker, Bilingual English Speaker, and Non-Bilingual English Speaker but even those labels are not necessarily getting to the crux of the problem described in this research.

Speaking English-as-an-L1 offers no guarantee of an ability to interact successfully with a wide variety of interlocutors; there are many varieties of English, many of which are mutually incomprehensible (Ur, 2010). Furthermore, native speakers of these many varieties of English are not guaranteed to be successful interlocutors with users of ELF (Litzenberg, 2013). Indeed, it may really be the case that English native speakers (however one may define the members of this group) are in especially acute need of training to adjust to a lingua franca world (Carey, 2013). It has been reported elsewhere that when monolingual or otherwise communicatively unaware/insensitive English speakers use language that is "too quick, too garbled or overly colloquial" (Skapinker, 2016), it can be argued that they are displaying a lack of communicative competence. Although "monolingualism is a curable disease" (Phillipson, 2003, p. 63), it has been noted regularly that "in many international fora, competent speakers of English as a second language are more comprehensible than native speakers, because they can be better at adjusting their language for people from differ cultural and linguistic backgrounds." Jennifer Jenkins (2008) also noted a 2005 news story from *The Observer* in which Korean Airlines had apparently chosen a flight simulator from a French supplier "because its 'off-shore' international English was clearer than that of the UK competitor."

A very large proportion of the speakers at MUN events are ELF users, even if they are not always in the majority. Although other countries may differ, the students who qualify to become delegates from our university in Japan typically have no less than IELTS 7.5 and can be therefore comfortably classified as C2—the highest level of proficient user, according to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). Despite their strong capabilities, over the years our students have struggled to make their voices heard and ensure that their policies and ideas become included into the working papers that form the basis of the important draft resolutions. I began to wonder if the burden of communication, comprehension, and cooperation was being fairly shared between all parties, especially between ELF and non-ELF users. Perhaps it was time to problematize the language behaviors of the native speaker/non-ELF speakers.

This brings us to the research questions for the present study:

1. Do ELF speakers encounter communication or comprehension difficulties when interacting with non-ELF (English native) speakers?
2. What are the sources/causes of these communication/comprehension difficulties?

3. The Study

Observations of ELF-speaking MUN delegates from Japan and Germany at three different MUN events were collected through a checklist and open-ended questionnaire (see Appendix A). The motivation was to get a sense of some of the shortcomings that native speakers display when communicating with ELF speakers in the context of MUN simulations. The checklist items probed possible trouble spots in: conversation management (Q1a, Q1b), cultural knowledge (Q1c, Q1g), manner of delivery (Q1d, Q1e), and lexical knowledge (Q1f, Q1h). The observations from this research will become the basis for two directions of training: 1) for non-ELF speakers who need to reconsider their style of communication, and 2) for ELF speakers who need to manage these less than cooperative speakers.

3.1 The Problems Detected

Based on the results of the checklist, almost all of the delegates indicated that they had experienced communication/comprehension difficulties when interacting with non-ELF (English native) speakers. Only two delegates claimed to have never encountered comprehension problems related to those items (See Table 1. for the frequencies for each type of difficulty).

The most frequently cited problem areas related to manner of delivery and lexical knowledge. Nearly two-thirds of the Japanese respondents noted that a Native Speaker who “spoke so fast that I could not understand” and more than two thirds of the German respondents claimed that “a Native Speaker used idioms/expressions that were unfamiliar to me” making both categories problematic to approximately half of all respondents. A solid 50% of respondents agreed that, “a Native Speaker used vocabulary words that I had not heard before.” Just over a quarter of respondents reported problems attributable to the categories of cultural knowledge and/or humor. Few reported problems with interruptions causing confusion and fewer still complained of interruptions leading to a feeling of frustration for the inability to finish an utterance, barely registered.

Based on these results, if one were looking for instructional targets, vocabulary, speech rate and idiom use would be promising starting points, followed by cultural knowledge, humor and dealing with interruptions. This could be both in the form of training for ELF speaker and also sensitivity training for non-cooperative speakers. Furthermore, one might consider strategy training to enhance the ability of ELF speakers to assert their conversational rights and take better control of communicative situations in which less communicatively cooperative speakers are making the interaction unnecessarily difficult or opaque.

Table 1. Questionnaire Responses from NMUN Delegates *n=17, **n=23)

		J* (%)	G** (%)	J+G (%)
Q1a	a NS interrupted me so I got confused and forgot what I was saying.	2 (11.8)	0 (00.0)	2 (5.0)
Q1b	a NS interrupted me so I was frustrated by not being able to finish.	1 (5.9)	2 (8.7)	3 (7.5)
Q1c	a NS said something that probably needed cultural or special knowledge in order to understand.	6 (35.3)	5 (21.7)	11 (27.5)
Q1d	a NS spoke in long, complex sentences so I could not follow the meaning.	4 (23.5)	3 (13.0)	7 (17.5)
Q1e	a NS spoke so fast that I could not understand.	10 (58.8)	9 (39.1)	19 (47.5)
Q1f	a NS used idioms/expressions that were unfamiliar to me.	7 (41.3)	15 (65.2)	22 (55.0)
Q1g	a NS used some kind of humor but I could not get the meaning.	6 (35.3)	5 (21.7)	11 (27.5)
Q1h	a NS used vocabulary words that I had not heard before.	10 (58.8)	10 (43.5)	20 (50.0)

The problem areas highlighted in this research indicate that certain native speakers may possess poor skills of accommodation, which can be defined as the "process by which speakers adjust their communicative behavior to that of their interlocutors in order to facilitate communication" (Cogo, 2010, p. 254). Therefore the previous calls for and recognition of the need for training in accommodation directed at native speakers of English have been validated (Skapinker, 2016; Frendo. 2016) by the findings in this study.

3.2 Delegate voices (Open-ended Question 2)

Most of the students included a description of their own experiences. Among those that comment on the issue of speed, here is a sampling with commentary, when appropriate.

> *Third day after submitting first working paper we had meeting with all together. Almost of them were NSs so that was difficult for me to catch up with their discussion. Only what I can do at that time was just keep my preamble and operative remain in the draft resolution, and instead I did my best to explain as much as possible when I ask about my ideas. (AY)*

> *Throughout the conference (in SC), there were many times when native speakers would start having fast-paced political debates on topics such as sovereignty. I found it hard to make a point while using sophisticated language like them. (AT)*

> *Discussion in which more than one NS was involved got a fast pace. (DS)*

In the case of the delegate *AY*, the speed interfered with comprehension while in the case of delegates *AT* and *DS*, it prevented the participation in normal turn-taking procedures.

> *NS listened my speaking very kindly but when they spoke to me, it was too fast then I felt I need to brush up my listening skill from now on. (RM)*

> *When a native speaker spoke so fast that I could not understand, I asked them "so you mean... what you are saying is...?" and did not try to show I did not understand what they meant, because I wanted to look confident so that I can work with them together as a capable delegate. (YM)*

Delegates RM and YM both responded to the speed of delivery problem by taking responsibility for their own lack of understanding. They proposed as a solution listening skill improvement and also employed social strategies to negotiate meaning/understanding without revealing any lack of confidence or listening proficiency.

The following example also involves speed as a cause of comprehension breakdown, but notice that the delegate interprets this as a function of familiarity with the topic repetition. So, it could be a natural phenomenon for speakers to increase the speed of their delivery as time goes by.

> *I had a delegate explain to me about his policies and who went at it at lightning speed, and it was difficult for me to even come up with questions. I felt that after everyone has had experience explaining policies and stances to many delegates, people would naturally start speaking a bit faster and sometimes omitting details. (HM)*

Speed can also be related the way that pauses are interpreted and treated during interactions. When a pause or silent contemplation is interpreted as inability it might be used against the delegate:

> *I was asked by other delegates about our working paper and I said "Let me see" and thought silently for a while because it is natural in Japan that we don't speak aloud when we are thinking and I wanted to make sure what I would answer. But that delegate said, "OK, who's your leader? I'll ask him" without any pause. I thought we need to answer instantly rather than perfectly accurate. (MY)*

While the speed of delivery issue may be unconscious in most cases, it has the potential to veer into more sinister territory—the speed of the interchange may be used as a technique to preclude an opportunity for other delegates to defend their policy point or even join the discussion. Such use of speed to filibuster or discourage discussion may be a type of negative negotiation strategy against which, participants might need or want additional training. Guarding against such behaviors is necessary in order to match the cooperative ideals espoused by MUN event organizers.

It must be noted that the delegates at these events were highly proficient—many are at the high end of C1 and approaching C2 according to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), which is the Mastery level. Furthermore, they had prepared extensively to be familiar with the jargon and technical vocabulary connected to the agenda items for the simulation. The following are comments from delegates that included references to vocabulary comprehension:

> *When I talked to a NS during informal caucus we were talking about something happening to a working paper. The NS was using some phrases to explain some other delegation said and I just didn't get the whole point*

> *of what he was saying because he used some words I didn't know. Can't remember the exact words. (LK)*
>
> *When we were in the informal caucus my working group began to rephrase some points of our working paper. I did not understand everything because they were trying to use highly academic language. (FL)*
>
> *One working paper was about judiciary and I haven't "heard" that word before (I had only seen it in writing). Without seeing the spelling I was totally lost and I didn't get what the paper was about. (PW)*
>
> *When we started working on the working paper, I talked to some different countries and they sometimes used words I did not understand or never had heard before. But I kindly asked them to explain it to me or to please repeat it for me. (WP)*
>
> *Didn't understand a word, opened Google and translated it and ask a NS to further explain.*

Note that in spite of the difficulties with vocabulary misunderstandings, these delegates still managed to participate successfully in the simulation and they used a range of strategies (social, cognitive, metacognitive) to deal with any problems they encountered. More commentary on strategy training will be offered in the discussion section.

Another delegate describe a frustrating example of how interruption not only disturbs the flow of cooperative conversation—it interferes with thought processes and can even undermine the confidence of the speaker.

> *When we wrote our resolutions I had a good idea on how to structure our paper. But when I tried to explain it I did not remember some words/phrases/expressions that would explain my point of view (why I wanted that specific order). Instead of letting me gather my thoughts and rephrase my explanations, they tried to help me and finished my sentences multiple times. That was annoying. (AF)*

NS never interrupted me while I was talking. It seemed that all NS may have understood that my English wasn't perfect. At the first half of the conference NS were generous, but as the conference went on they got irritated. (TM)

In the case of the second example, the delegate reports not being interrupted but qualifies that with the commentary that indicates that was a behavior early in the event—once the stakes were higher and the negotiations more consequential, cooperation gave way to expressions of irritation towards the ELF user. Again this type of problem clearly needs to be addressed, as the irritation felt and expressed by the NS is certainly not the sole responsibility of the ELF speaker; the NS needs to be aware of and monitor his/her own conversational behavior.

4. Discussion

4.1 General Solutions

Clearly, the communicative burden to ensure mutual comprehensibility needs to be shared by all participants in an interaction. To this end, "native speakers need to become more aware of international business English: to modify their own language, to stop viewing these simplifications as sub-standard forms of English and to realize that they are missing out on an efficient communication tool" (Bartlett & Johnson, 1998, p. 6). Furthermore, "whether native or nonnative, communicators need to learn or be taught to listen, make situational adjustments, and use sociopragmatic, situational potential to jointly create meanings and operational cultures" (Charles, 2006, cited in Charles, 2007, p. 279).

Also, strategy use for encouraging mutual comprehensibility may be influenced by the speaker's own cultural values. Lee (2013) reports that East Asian ELF speakers adopt convergent pragmatic solidarity-building strategies such as repetition, paraphrase, and utterance completion (Cogo & Dewey, 2012) that mirror their cultural values of positive politeness, consensus building and rapport strengthening. Native speakers engaging in negotiations with ELF users should likely be trained or sensitized towards employing these kinds of strategies. Yet, although some people are able to accommodate without much training, they still might require some help to learn how to better choose or vary their communication strategies (Sweeney & Zhu Hua, 2010).

Frendo (2016) suggests offering classes to train native speakers and non-native speakers together. The workshops could include a range of business communication skills such as small talk, presentations, negotiations, and meetings. Frendo notes, "that the native speakers are not necessarily the ones who do best in the negotiation role-plays, or presentations" which may be conversely a huge benefit to ELF speakers. The native speakers

> *come away with a greater awareness of their own limitations and an improved understanding of the strategies they might use in order to communicate most effectively in an international context [by taking] part in role-plays, discussion etc. where it is what they say that counts, not the fact that they are native speakers.*

4.2 Specific Solutions

The respondents to the questionnaire indicated that there are specific areas of concern that could be fruitful with regard to the sensitivity retraining of native speaker participants in MUN simulations. It is therefore only right that specific recommendations and rationales be offered. The areas for training will be dealt with in the order of frequency or complaint: 1) speech rate (too fast or too slow), 2) idioms, and 3) vocabulary. Many of the recommendations are adapted from a list prepared by Halsdorf (2103). In most cases, a three step cycle moving from awareness raising to guided/controlled practice to free interaction is recommended.

4.2.1 Speech rate

Problematic speech rate was the most frequently cited problem faced by the ELF speakers in the study.

Step 1. Awareness-raising: The first step is to raise NS awareness of the issues related to speech rate. According to SpeakerHub (n.d.), the following are speech rate guidelines:

- Slow: less than 110 wpm
- Conversational: between 120 wpm and 150 wpm.
- Fast: more than 160 wpm
    - Radio hosts and podcasters speak at 150–160 wpm.
    - Auctioneers and commentators speak between 250 to 400 wpm.

Of course, there are times when all speakers will vary the pace of their delivery—they speed up when excited and passionate and may slow down to indicate seriousness and sincerity. However, speaking for too long at either speech rate extreme is not a good idea since speed will soon overwhelm the listener and slowness will lead to boredom and might even be construed as offensive if the slow speed is perceived as a comment on the listener's language ability.

Another reason that native speakers need to be made aware of the danger of high speed in speech rate is related to a commensurate decline in clear pronunciation and articulation. Table 2 summarizes three areas especially susceptible with increased speed.

Table 2. Articulatory Problems Associated with Increased Speech Rate

Problem area	Results in	Comments
Contractions	Net increase in speed	Very difficult to perceive in the midst of conversation.
Consonant segmental deletion and elision	Net increase in speed	Huge challenges in comprehension with very little communication payoff.
Linking and vowel reduction	Word boundary confusion	Such commonly reduced phrases are not consistently taught in language programs (e.g., gonna, shoulda, dijyu).

To summarize, contractions and other kinds of consonant segmental deletions (which both contribute to speed) are confusing and best avoided. Also, vowel deletions and lining patterns in even commonly reduced phrases may be problematic since they are not always explicitly taught in foreign language courses and would therefore be unfamiliar. When such deletions are added to a mix of local accents, dialects, or slang, the resulting speech stream may be virtually incomprehensible.

Step 2. Guided/controlled practice: It is usually not enough just to bring the causes of excess speed (contractions, deletions and linking) to the attention of speakers. They will need to develop a means of monitoring their own speech, first to discover how much (or how little) they currently engage in this behavior and then in order to maintain a clear speech behavior (see Table 3).

Table 3. Activities to Develop Self-monitoring and Speed Control Strategies

Activity	Objective	Description/procedure
Self-monitor	Establish a baseline assessment of pronunciation behavior.	Record self (in dialogue or monologue). Listen for contractions, elisions, deletions, and transcribe those instances.
Monitor Pairs	Offer instant feedback in a supportive environment.	Partner A tells a story or explains a procedure. When Partner B hears a contraction/ deletion they interrupt by repeating the problematic word/phrase with a question intonation. Switch roles.
Pace Changer Pairs/Groups	Develop conscious control over delivery rate. Observe the effect of speech rate variations via the reaction of listeners.	Read aloud a story or article and deliberately speed up to express excitement or slow down to emphasize seriousness or sincerity. Pairs/Groups react with verbal backchannels and reactions and give feedback if speech rate renders speech incomprehensible.

Step 3. Free interaction: As the name of this step indicates, there needs to be opportunities for workshop participants to incorporate these new awareness insights, skills and strategies within the context of free interaction—preferably while discussing MUN related topics in a close approximation of a simulation event.

4.2.2 Idioms

The use of idioms and idiomatic expressions is the second most problematic speech habit of native speakers for ELF speakers according the results of this study.

Step 1. Awareness-raising: The native speaker will likely need to be reminded of what an idiom or idiomatic expression actually is since they are so accustomed to including them in their every day speech (see Table 4). A standard definition of "idiom" according to Dictionary.com is "a group of words established by usage as having a meaning not deducible from those of the individual words." Because of the ubiquity of idioms in speech, native speakers may not really be aware of how difficult they are for others to understand since they forget that the meaning cannot easily be worked out by just looking at the words themselves.

This is not so say that idioms must be banned completely from speech in ELF contexts. It would likely be impossible and furthermore, there may be some cases in which an idiom may add some nuance to a discussion. A selection of idioms that have been observed[1] in MUN simulations supplemented by common idioms used in negotiations (see Appendix B) offer a resource basis for a variety of activities.

Table 4. Activities for Awareness-raising of Idioms and Idiomatic Phrases

Activity	Objective	Description/procedure
Self-monitoring	Establish a baseline assessment of idiom use.	Record self (in dialogue or monologue). Listen for idioms and transcribe those instances. Define each of the idioms used. Think of a paraphrase.
Idiom flash cards	Develop native speaker awareness of core meanings of idioms so they can try to make them more transparent.	Create flash cards with idioms/ idiomatic phrases on one side and definitions on the other (columns 1 & 2 of Appendix B).

Step 2. Guided/controlled practice: The activities in this step are intended to develop Native Speaker accommodation strategies to make an idiom more transparent (if it is important to the discussion) or to monitor whether the idiom used is leading to misunderstanding (see Table 5). If done sufficiently, these activities will improve the native speaker's skill at using a more globalized version of English that uses idioms sparingly or in accordance with the current relevant community of practice.

[1] Based on informal note keeping by researcher.

Table 5. Activities for Guided/Controlled Practice of Idioms and Idiomatic Phrases

Activity	Objective	Description/procedure
In other words	Develop native speaker accommodation strategies to enable them to make an idiom more transparent.	For each idiomatic expression, think of a reformulation or expansion sentence to help clarify the meaning (columns 1 and 3 of Appendix B).
Subtitles Please![2]	Offer instant feedback in a supportive environment. Monitor whether the idiom used is leading to misunderstanding. Improve Native Speaker skill for using a more globalized version of English that uses idioms sparingly.	Partner A tells a story or explains a procedure. When Partner B hears an idiomatic expression, they raise a card that says, "Subtitles please!" The speaker will then rephrase the expression to make it easy to understand.

Step 3. Free interaction: As the name of this step indicates, there needs to be opportunities for workshop participants to incorporate these new awareness insights, skills and strategies within the context of free interaction—preferably while discussing MUN related topics in a close approximation of a simulation event.

4.2.3 Vocabulary

Even though MUN simulations are a community of practice and therefore have much specialized terminology and participants regularly use a range of acronyms (e.g., SC, Security Council; GA, General Assembly), there should still attempts to limit jargon or ensure it is comprehensible to all.

Step 1. Awareness-raising: As with other problem areas, the first step is to raise native speaker awareness of the effect of their own use of jargon or technical vocabulary on other listeners. This can be done by "turning the tables" on them by putting them in a position to not comprehend what is being said, even though they

[2] Inspired by article and title by Roccasalvo (2013).

are required to participate in the interaction (see Table 6).

Table 6. Activities for Awareness-raising of Jargon and Technical Vocabulary

Activity	Objective	Description/procedure
Turning the tables	Raise native speaker awareness of the effect of jargon use, which makes interactions incomprehensible.	Put in native speaker and ELF user pairs. The ELF user will talk about a MUN topic and the native speaker will be asked to paraphrase each sentence. However, the ELF user will secretly be instructed to substitute nouns and lexical verbs with non-English words (from a language they know but that the native speaker does not know).

Step 2. Guided/controlled practice: The activities in this step will develop native speaker accommodation strategies (see Table 7). First, they need to learn how to monitor the effect of their talk on others—to be sensitive to signs of miscomprehension and more proactive in addressing the problem.

Table 7. Activities for Guided /Controlled practice of Jargon and Technical Vocabulary

Activity	Objective	Description/procedure
Feedback session: Did I lose you?	Monitor the effect of their talk on others. To be sensitive to signs of miscomprehension. To be more proactive in addressing the problem.	Video pairs discussing a MUN topic. Review the video and ask the native speaker to indicate if and where their partner was having comprehension trouble. Confirm or disconfirm each instance with the partner.
Department of Redundancy Department	Make an unfamiliar or technical vocabulary item more transparent through the addition of a paraphrased definition.	Get native speaker to summarize their position on an issue. However, they must be redundant on purpose by expressing the same idea using different words or phrases, two sentences in a row.

Then they need practice making an unfamiliar or technical vocabulary item more transparent through the addition of a paraphrased definition and by paraphrasing complex propositions another way. Practice activities like these will improve native speaker ability to use a more globalized version of English that uses jargon and technical vocabulary sparingly or in accordance with the current relevant community of practice.

Step 3. Free interaction: As the name of this step indicates, there needs to be opportunities for workshop participants to incorporate these new awareness insights, skills and strategies within the context of free interaction—preferably while discussing MUN related topics in a close approximation of a simulation event.

5. Conclusions

The current study focused on the sources of comprehension and communication difficulties experienced by ELF users during MUN events. Sometimes the difficulties they encountered were due to the lack of accommodation strategies performed by native speaker interlocutors, who did not monitor the speed of their delivery, used idioms or vocabulary that were unnecessarily opaque or participated in other non-cooperative behaviors.

These problematic behaviors may be largely unconscious, thus there is definitely a role for awareness raising and communication training in this group. It must be acknowledged that everyone has strengths and everyone has weaknesses. However, it is incumbent upon all participants to learn to appreciate that communicating effectively is one important goal of the event; doing so through mutual respect and cooperation should absolutely be the way.

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Appendix A

Communication during MUN Simulations

We are doing some research into the communication experiences of MUN simulation participants. Thank you in advance for taking time to answer.

Think back to interactions that you had with delegates who you think were Native Speakers (NS) of English.

Although you may have enjoyed your conversations, you might have also experienced some difficulties too. These moments of difficulty in communication are the focus of this research.

1. Please check (any or all of) the following things you may have experienced:

○ a NS interrupted me so I got confused and forgot what I was saying.

○ a NS interrupted me so I was frustrated by not being able to finish.

○ a NS said something that probably needed cultural or special knowledge in order to understand.

○ a NS spoke in long, complex sentences so I could not follow the meaning.

○ a NS spoke so fast that I could not understand.

○ a NS used idioms/expressions that were unfamiliar to me.

○ a NS used some kind of humor but I could not get the meaning.

○ a NS used vocabulary words that I had not heard before.

2. Please write about some specific examples with as much detail as you can remember. Use the back of this sheet if you need.

Appendix B: Idiom Resource List

Idiom	Meaning	Idiom sentence and possible expansion/clarifier sentence
Above board	Open, honest and legal	*Our dealings have always been above board. There are no secret negotiations.*
(have an) ace up your sleeve	Having something in reserve with which you can gain an advantage.	*I've got an ace up my sleeve. I'm well prepared for the working paper negotiations.*
At stake	Something that can be gained or lost.	*There was much at stake during the negotiations. Both sides had a lot to lose or win.*
Back down (from something)	To yield in one's position during negotiations, or to not continue with a threat to do something.	*The Security Council backed down on its threat to call for economic sanctions. They withdrew the proposal.*
Back to square one	They have not succeeded in what they were trying to do, so they have to start again.	*It is back to square one. When they refused the amended clause, all our work was for nothing so we have to try another approach.*
Beggars can't be choosers	You should not reject an offer if it is the only possibility you have. You have no choice.	*Beggars can't be choosers! There is no other option.*
Bend over backwards	Try very hard to do something, especially to please somebody.	*The committee members bent over backwards to try and persuade the delegates to accept their resolution clause.*
Bone of contention	A matter or subject about which there is a lot of disagreement.	*The topics have been agreed on, but the number of working papers is still a bone of contention.*
Bring nothing to the table	To have nothing of interest to offer the other side.	*There will be no agreement if we all bring nothing to the table.*
Close the/a deal	To end a negotiation successfully	*With much effort and cooperation we were able to close the deal.*
Down to the wire	Near a deadline, with little time remaining	*They went down to the wire but just in time the two sides agreed.*

Drive a hard bargain	To always make sure one gains advantage in a business deal.	*Be prepared for tough negotiations with the delegate of Chad. She drives a hard bargain.*
Leave the door open	Behave in such a way as to allow the possibility of further action.	*The committee left the door open for further negotiations. They welcomed new ideas.*
Leave no stone unturned	To try everything possible in order to achieve something	*They left no stone unturned in their effort to reach an agreement. They tried everything.*
Meet half way	Agree to a compromise and give the other side part of what they are trying to get.	*We can't agree to all your conditions but we could perhaps agree to meet half way.*
Nitty-gritty	The most important points or the practical details.	*We didn't get down to the nitty-gritty; no details were discussed.*
Prepare the ground	To try to make it easier for a future event or action to happen or be accepted.	*The two foreign ministers prepared the ground for negotiations. They eased tensions to help us all agree.*
Sticking point	A controversial issue that causes an interruption or blocks progress in discussions or negotiations.	*The choice of words in the clause was a sticking point in the negotiations. The words needed to be changed to keep talks going.*
Sweeten the deal	To offer something during a negotiation that is attractive to the other side	*We sweetened the deal during the negotiations in order to get more signatories. We made sure everyone had something to gain.*
Take stock of the situation	To assess all the aspects in order to form an opinion.	*Take stock of the situation before making a suggestion. Think and research before you speak!*
Water (something) down *or* water down (something)	To change something in a way that makes it weaker	*The opponents to our action tried to water down our proposal. They suggested changes that would make the proposal weak and meaningless.*