English Language Instructors' Views on ELF and ELF-Related Issues

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Abstract

In the globalizing world, English has gained the status of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), and World Englishes have already manifested themselves in English Language Teaching (ELT). In light of this, exploring the perspectives of English instructors, who occupy a pivotal role in English language teaching, has become vital. Henceforth, this study aims to investigate English instructors' views and instructional practices regarding their ELF awareness in higher education. A mixed-methods research design was employed as a research methodology, encompassing quantitative and qualitative data collection through a statement list and semi-structured interviews. The findings revealed that most English instructors showed a profound awareness regarding concepts of native speakerism and World Englishes as well as a forward-thinking approach towards incorporating ELF into higher education language classrooms by expressing a desire for English lessons to encompass a wide range of Englishes and world cultures, reflecting a more comprehensive and globally relevant attitude.

Keywords: English, ELF, World Englishes, ELT, higher education

Introduction

English has acquired a new standing as a result of globalization. The widespread adoption of globalization has significantly influenced many aspects of individuals' lives. However, it is worth noting that globalization may not have attained its current position without the presence of a shared language that facilitates interactions among people. The language is unquestionably English. Due to the widespread adoption of globalization, the significance of English as a global language has undergone significant transformation (Tosuncuoğlu & Kirmizi, 2019). Today, English is widely acknowledged in academia as a lingua franca, serving as the shared language for individuals with diverse first-language origins (Jenkins, 2000; Seidlhofer, 2001; Walker, 2010). A lingua franca is a language that serves as a common means of communication among individuals who have different native languages (Geçkinli &Yılmaz, 2021). Jenkins (2015) detailed the several interpretations of English as a lingua franca (ELF), which have undergone changes throughout history. Initially, it was characterized as a means of communication between individuals who spoke different native languages (Jenkins, 2009). Subsequently, the concept was broadened to include not just the contact between individuals with different native languages but also those who choose to interact in the English language (Seidlhofer, 2011). Ultimately, it was seen as a potential choice for conducting English as an ELF in conjunction with many other languages (Mortensen, 2013).

Standard English, or World English, is another critical issue in language instruction. The term "WE" is an inclusive title encompassing all regional variations that emerge due to the variety of utilization in particular geographical regions caused by linguistic and cultural distinctions (Jenkins, 2009). According to scholars of WE, new varieties of 'Englishes' with distinct vocabulary, phrases, accents, social conventions, and grammatical systems have appeared globally (Berns et al., 2007; Jenkins, 2007; Kachru, 1992; Mesthrie, 2006; Modiano, 1999; Seidlhofer, 2001). As a result, scholars argue that it would be inappropriate to apply the standards of English for native speakers to ELT by limiting one variety of the language (Wang, 2012). With the current reality of altered communication, scholars have started to question the traditional norm-based English language education approaches that focus primarily on British or American English. Therefore, this specific research seeks to uncover language instructors' views, attitudes, and potential implications for language instruction in terms of incorporating ELF into their classes. As to accomplish this aim, the following research question was developed:

RQ1: What are the perspectives and instructional practices of English instructors working at Çukurova University School of Foreign Languages regarding their awareness of ELF in relation to native speakerism and recognition of World Englishes and cultures?

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a mixed-methods research design that included both quantitative and qualitative data collected through a statement list and a semi-structured interview. Mixed-methods research design combines quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis to provide a more comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon (Creswell, 2014). In the first

phase of this study, it was aimed to investigate the EFL instructors' views on ELF and related issues using a statement list. In the second phase, semi-structured interviews were conducted to provide qualitative data.

Setting and Participants

The quantitative data was collected with 30 ELF instructors, and the qualitative data was obtained from six participants who had already filled out the statement list. The instructors were on duty in the Çukurova University School of Foreign Languages in Adana, Turkey.

Data Collection and Analysis

In this study, a statement list and a semi-structured interview were used as data collection tools. The quantitative data were collected through a statement list that was designed by Sert and Özkan (2018), and the qualitative data were obtained through semi-structured interviews. The quantitative data were analyzed via SPSS Version 25.0 and descriptive statistics were obtained following data gathering, and afterward, the qualitative data were analyzed through thematic analysis. Ensuring the external validity of this study was achieved through the use of random sampling method. In addition to this, researchers aimed to enhance reliability of the qualitative data by implementing member-checking throughout all the transcribing and coding process.

Results

It is crucial to better understand teachers' perspectives and practices on ELF in order to develop a more flexible and context-specific approach to language instruction. Henceforth, the statement list, as Table 1. suggests, aimed to identify the participants' perspectives on the concept of good English, Standard English, their own English and their individual preferences for an educational setting.

Table 1. The Results of the Statement List

Statements	Yes	No
1. I think it is important to be able to speak SBr/Amr English.	40%	60%
2. I think good English is being able to speak SBr/Amr English.	32%	68%
3. I like the way I speak English.	80%	20%
4. I try to imitate SBr/Amr. accent when speaking English.	24%	76%
5. I feel uncomfortable because of my mother tongue effect.	32%	68%
6. I prefer Englishes other than Standard British/American English to be included in English lessons.	72%	28%
7. I think understanding different Englishes is important for my English language education.	92%	8%
8. I prefer Standard Br/Amr English to be central in English classes.	52%	48%
9. I prefer my English to be like a British or American.	36%	64%
10. I prefer World Cultures to be included in English classes along with British and American cultures.	96%	4%
11. I prefer British and American culture to be central in English classes.	16%	84%
12. I think it is important to have an awareness about World Culture for my English language education.	100%	0%

As seen in Table 1, 60% of the participants didn't think being able to speak Standard British /American English was important. However, 68% of them stated that good English was not being able to speak Standard British /American English. Additionally, 80% of the participants

liked the way they speak English. 76% of them didn't accept that they tried to imitate Standard British /American accent when speaking English while 68% of them didn't agree that they felt uncomfortable because of their mother tongue effect. In addition, 72% of the participants agreed that they preferred Englishes other than Standard British/American English to be included in English lessons.

A great deal of them (92%) asserted that they thought understanding different Englishes was important for their English language education. Also, 52% of them uttered they preferred Standard British /American English to be central in English classes whereas 48% of them didn't agree with the statement. On the one hand, 64% of them responded they did not prefer their English to be like a British or American, on the other hand, 96% of them preferred World Cultures to be included in English classes along with British and American cultures. Besides, 84% of them opposed the idea of British and American culture to be central in English classes. In conjunction with this, all of the participants agreed upon that it was important to have an awareness about World Culture for my English language education.

On account of the quantitative findings, the majority of the participants expressed openness to World Englishes with a notable affection toward including World Englishes and cultures in EFL classes by opposing imitating Standard British or American accents and appreciating their own way of speaking English.

Findings from Semi-Structured Interviews

Parallel to the results of the quantitative data, findings from qualitative data also indicated that there was a significant shift in the participants' opinions about the status of Standard British / American English and what constitutes good English. After carrying out and analyzing six interviews in total, Table 2 was generated through a careful implementation of steps of thematic analysis by Braun and Clarke (2006).

Table 2. The Analysis of Semi-Structured Interviews

Themes	Codes		Frequency
Integration of ELF	focusing on effective communication rather than attempting to sound like native speakers	the challenge of students with lower proficiency levels in understanding the concept	4
Inclusion of World Englishes	non-native speakers significantly outnumber native speakers.	World Englishes are more relatable to their students than inner circle accents.	6
Prioritizing Native Speaker Norms	a rejection to the strict focus on native speaker norms	encouraging students to be comfortable with their own accents.	5
Incorporating Non-Native Accents	Students will understand the non-native accents better than the native ones.	taking materials from the internet which has much of the non-native accents	4
Effective Resources and Strategies	resources that are very effective in teaching the students different accents	YouTube, Tedtalks	4

The aim of the interview was to explore deeper understanding of the participants' opinions on the ELF concept. Therefore, five questions were asked to obtain personal views and experiences towards how to integrate ELF into language classes. The results illustrated that English

language instructors were aware of the importance of effective communication and being intelligible rather than imitating native speakers. However, they also stated that understanding the concept could create difficulty in students with lower proficiency levels.

In addition to this, the participants paid attention to the inclusion of World Englishes into their classes since they are more relatable to their students than inner circle accents. One of the participants uttered that:

> P3: "*Our students will communicate with people having various linguistic backgrounds. As the number of non-native speakers have outnumbered the native speakers (Crystal, 2014), so my students will mostly communicate with non-native speakers of English*."

Furthermore, they showed a deliberate rejection to the strict focus on native speaker norms by emphasizing the significance of encouraging students to be comfortable with their own accents. One of the participants stated that:

> P2: "*We as the expanding circle speakers of English are closer to the non-native accents and feel more relaxed with our accent than with the native norms*."

Along with the acceptance of World Englishes, the participants found easy to incorporate non-native accents and indicated that students would understand the non-native accents better than the native ones, especially finding British accent challenging for students. They uttered that taking materials from the internet which has much of the non-native accents would ease the process and enhance students understanding of the ELF concept.

Finally, the participants were asked to suggest resources, materials, or strategies they found most effective in promoting awareness and understanding of ELF, native speakerism, and World Englishes among their students. They expressed their preference about resources that were very effective in teaching the students different accents and they mostly find them in digital platforms like Youtube, Tedtalks etc. One of the participants also asserted that:

> P5: "*I always mention that I am never a fan of the idea of being a native-like, my students always know it. I also explain in all my classes that the world is globalizing and the status of the English language has changed, underlining that it has already become a must if we want to be a global citizen.*"

When the results of semi-structured interviews are taken into account, there is an approach among the language instructors in preparing their students for effective global communication. Their main goal was to integrate the ELF concept, introduce the World Englishes and show a rigid rejection of acceptance only native speaker norms with the belief of providing their students a more inclusive, diverse and realistic language learning environment helping them to become global citizens.

Discussion

The present study addresses the need for a shift in language instructors' opinions upon the ELF concept, integration of World Englishes and leaving the strict native speakerism norms in order to spread and enhance the increasing importance of global citizenship as well as explores the instructional practices of language instructors through a descriptive case study. The results revealed a collective transformation in growing awareness of the significance in being intelligible while speaking English, feeling comfortable with one's own accent and prioritizing effective communication over native-like pronunciation. Accepting the gained global status of

English, the study suggests that language instructors are willing to integrate ELF concept and World Englishes into their classes as Tosuncuoglu and Kirmizi pointed in their study that language instructors agreed on the idea that English language instructors should fulfil the requirements of the modern, globalised and altering world for the purposes of English Language teaching (2019). However, opposing the results of the given study, the participants of this study disagreed that Standard British / American English is easier than the others so that Standard English should be learnt. On the contrary, their instructional practices showed an interest to incorporate different accent and diverse English in their classroom settings as to raise awareness among students and provide them a relaxing environment.

Moreover, as Sert and Özkan thoroughly discussed in their study that the ELF should not be regarded as a notion in contrast with the norm-based systems, particularly in EFL teaching contexts, in reverse, it could be viewed as a supplementary approach fostering awareness of diversity in English, motivating students to appreciate their own English (2018). As the findings revealed, the more language instructors start to be aware of the concept and enrich their classrooms through various strategies in order to integrate World Englishes and cultures, the more students become enthusiastic about their own Englishes and they feel more inclusive into the rapidly growing world.

The instructors' commitment to incorporating ELF into their classes reflects their idea of giving more attention to the effective communication taking precedence over native-like proficiency. As the related studies suggest, language instructors holding this sort of view may help them establish more fruitful, beneficial and confidently-driven classrooms (Jenkins, 2009; Seidlhofer, 2011).

Conclusion

This current study investigated how the ELF concept was perceived among language instructors and its reflections into English language classrooms. The results indicated that a great number of the participants was concerned about the shift in the diversity of English that they hold the belief of a globalized world. In spite of the ongoing discussion on native-speaker like usage of English, the majority supported teaching diversified varieties of English and culture. Additionally, adopting these sorts of innovative beliefs about the implementation of ELF has the power of altering students' hesitant attitude toward speaking and language use in and outside the classroom helping them to gain self-confidence and willingness to speak the language.

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