

THE IMPACT OF ENGLISH AS A LINGUA FRANCA ON THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE PEDAGOGY

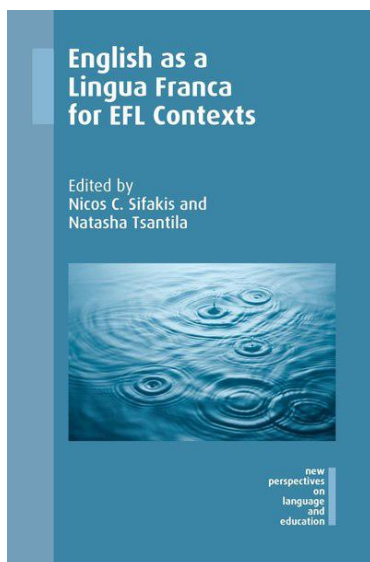
Sifakis, N. & Tsantila N. (2019). *English as a Lingua Franca for EFL Contexts*.
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Abstract. The current review not only presents an overview of the content and structure of the book „English as a Lingua Franca for EFL Contexts” by N.Sifakis and N.Tsantila, but it also comments and evaluates the work in the light of the changes that the global status of English brings for English language didactics in the 21st century. The heterogenous, multilingual and multicultural nature of English as a lingua franca demands for a shift in foreign/ L2 teaching and learning practices. The present article enumerates various strengths of the book. It shows that although there has been an increase in researching ELF pedagogical implications, the reviewed book fills the niche and focuses on its practical applicability in classroom instruction, materials development, teacher education, assessment and testing. The review is intended for those EFL practitioners who wish to explore how to make use of ELF research findings in practice. It may be also of interest to materials writers and teacher educators.

Keywords: English as a lingua franca; ELF-aware pedagogy; English language teaching



English as a lingua franca (ELF) has become a salient phenomenon in the English language pedagogy. Its heterogenous, multilingual and multicultural nature has impact on how we perceive the notion of Standard English, native speakers, English-speaking cultures, correctness, the ownership of English etc. It therefore demands a shift in

EFL classroom practices. Although there has been a general increase in the research focused on important pedagogical implications of ELF, its practical applicability in classroom instruction, materials development, teacher education, assessment and testing, to mention just the most obvious aspects of language teaching and learning, is still largely unexplored, underdeveloped and unclear. As a result, a great number of EFL practitioners, including both pre-service and in-service teachers, remain sceptical and hesitant to adopt an ELF-oriented approach in their teaching practice. As observed by Jenkins (2014:24), “ELF seems to have aroused an unusually high degree of concern as well as a good deal of animosity, sometimes as a result of misinterpretation or of assumptions based on out of date information.” Some of the controversy surrounding ELF stems from a rather dubious status of ELF in English language didactics, so it is necessary to point out that ELF researchers have never intended to force teachers to teach ELF as a distinct codifiable language variety – teachable in all contexts as a monolithic version. Instead, language teachers are encouraged to become ELF-aware (e.g. Sifakis 2014, 2017) and rethink their beliefs and assumptions concerning teaching English, adequately attending to the changing needs of their learners, who are nowadays perceived as intercultural users of English (Jenkins et al. 2011). This is precisely the leitmotif of the volume *English as a Lingua Franca for EFL Contexts*, edited by Sifakis and Tsantila.

The book is divided into five parts: Foundations, ELF in EFL Pedagogy, ELF and EFL Language Learning Materials, ELF and EFL Teacher Education and ELF in EFL Assessment and Testing, and contains the introduction by the editors and a concluding chapter by Kirkpatrick. As highlighted in these titles, the ELF-EFL contrast or rather harmony is a common thread woven through and connecting various aspects of ELF-awareness promoted by the contributors from around the globe.

The introductory section **Foundations** builds the theoretical framework and lays the rational basis for linking ELF with EFL. In the first chapter titled “ELF for EFL: A Change of Subject”, Seidlhofer and Widdowson encourage teachers to redefine the content of what they teach from the ELF perspective and to reflect on how the use of ELF may affect the objectives of TEFL. They describe an “either-or” position in teaching English, suggesting that there are two alternatives for teachers: Either they “can persist in teaching a competence that learners rarely attain” (p.40.), as regulated by the native speaker’s norms, or they can set objectives which, corresponding to the actual learners’ needs, are realistic and achievable. The latter entails that ELF should inform the way English is taught in the classroom. In chapter two, “Towards the Reconciliation of ELF and EFL: Theoretical Issues and Pedagogical Challenges”, Kohn draws on a social constructivist perspective on language learning and communication and proposes ways how to bridge the gap between diverging pedagogical views on ELF and EFL. He suggests that teachers should integrate online exposure to ELF communication and telecollaborative intercultural ELF exchanges into their teaching, which could be an ideal way to develop learners’ ELF competence and their communicative ability.

Part 2: **ELF in EFL Pedagogy** consists of two papers which, as the editors point out in the Introduction, focus on “more empirical perspectives of linking ELF with EFL pedagogy” (p.21). In the chapter “ELF-aware teaching in practice: A teacher’s perspective” Kordia describes her own experience with implementing ELF into her teaching practice. She also presents and discusses three ELF-aware teaching activities that she has designed. In my view, showing the difficulties the author has encountered herself seems supportive for those who face challenges when designing and delivering ELF-aware courses, such as for example the reluctance of students and other stakeholders, for example ELT examination boards and publishing industry who resist change. The chapter “Developing an ELF-aware Intercultural Purpose in the Thai University Context” by Tantiniranat and Fay concentrates on the link between ELF-aware teaching and teaching English for intercultural communication (EIC). The authors focus on the Thai University EFL context to encourage all ELT practitioners to reorient the native-speaker norm-based EFL teaching with an ELF-aware, EIC purpose.

The third section of the book, **ELF and EFL Language Materials**, embraces 3 papers. In the paper entitled „Perspectives in WE- and ELF-informed ELT Materials in Teacher Education” Lopriore and Vettorel stress the need to raise teachers' awareness of ELT materials evaluation within a WE (World Englishes)/ELF-aware perspective. They present criteria for materials evaluation, adaptation and design. The authors argue that a critical approach to ELT materials should be part of teacher education in order to promote a more plurilithic nature of English. The most valuable part, it seems to me, is the section in which the authors contribute examples of modifications and expansion of coursebook activities within WE-/ELF-aware perspective developed in two teacher education programmes at the University of Roma Tre and the University of Verona in Italy. In a similar vein the authors of the chapter that follows, “When the Textbook is Not Enough: How to Shape an ELF Classroom?” describe the Portuguese ELT curriculum with a special emphasis on the linguistic and cultural representations in EFL coursebooks available in Portugal. Guerra and Cavalheiro encourage teachers to reflect on, recognise and assess how the language and culture are portrayed in course books in their own contexts, and they present some guidelines on how to implement an ELF-oriented approach by supplementing the published materials. Pointing out that the Portuguese context is hegemonized by the conception of English dominated by native speaker norms, where publishers continue to focus mainly on the British and American varieties and cultures, they show that applying an ELF-aware approach in the teaching and learning practice can be realized in a straightforward way. The last chapter in this part “ELT Materials for Basic Education in Brazil: Has the Time for an ELF-aware Practice Arrived?” by Siqueira and Matos concentrates on the Brazilian context. The authors present the results of a brief study of a few EFL high-school coursebooks approved in 2015 edition of the National Textbook Programme in Brazil. They focus on how these materials are linguistically, methodologically and ideologically oriented. Although the Brazilian context seems to be still ENL-oriented and there is an obvious

predominance of inner-circle materials, it is possible to introduce a more ELF-sensitive pedagogy by redesigning and adapting existing activities.

Part 4, **ELF and EFL Teacher Education**, includes three chapters. In “ELF-awareness in Teaching and Teacher Education: Explicit and Implicit Ways of Integrating ELF into the English Language Classroom”, Kemaloglu-Er and Bayyurt start from presenting the definition of ELF-awareness in teaching and teacher education and go on to demonstrate the results of a study conducted in Turkey in which pre-service teachers were exposed to an ELF-aware teacher education programme consisting of both theoretical and practical training in ELF and ELF-aware pedagogy. The part which, I believe, will be most appreciated by ELT practitioners presents sample lessons showing both implicit and explicit ways of integrating ELF with classroom procedures. Llurda and Mocanu’s ideas put forth in “Changing Teachers’ Attitudes Towards ELF” evolve around the need for a change in non-native teachers’ attitudes, from an NS-oriented approach to a global English perspective, in which the role of ELF and non-native speakers use of English in international communicative contexts is duly acknowledged. They propose an awareness-raising model of five-stage teacher training programme aiming at developing a better understanding of English language diversity and enhancing non-native teachers’ sense of self-esteem into their profession. The issue of the teacher’s sense of efficacy in teaching not only English but also ELF is examined in the next text, “Exploring Teachers’ Sense of Efficacy in Teaching ELF” by Sougari. The researcher presents the profiles of four Greek EFL teachers who participated in a study, the aim of which was to investigate their level of efficacy. The central question that Sougari asks is what it means to be efficacious in teaching ELF, stressing the need for teachers to respond to the new reality and follow an ELF-awareness raising programme.

The last section of the book, **ELF in EFL Assessment and Testing**, comprises two chapters which deal with the challenges the new status of English and globalisation give rise to in the field of assessment and testing. In “ELF in Language Tests”, Newbold defines what an ELF-aware test should look like, concentrating on how ELF influences test-related issues, such as reliability, validity and fairness. He focuses on the rationale for test designers to engage with ELF. The author gives some practical advice on how to test productive and receptive skills taking into consideration the way English is actually used in the world nowadays. He argues that developing an ELF-aware test requires a different approach to errors, different kinds of input materials used and special assessment grids. In the joint chapter “Towards an ELF-aware Alternative Assessment Paradigm in EFL Contexts” by Kouvdou and Tsagari, the results of an empirical project focused on alternative assessment conducted in two Greek state schools are presented. The authors discuss the benefits of alternative assessment (e.g. in the form of systematic observation) over standardised testing and show its compatibility with ELF-aware contexts.

The book makes practitioners realize that English language didactics in the 21st century can hardly ignore the global status of English. It raises awareness of the

importance of ELF and is intended especially for those EFL practitioners who wish to explore how to integrate ELF research findings in practice. This book fills a niche in the field of ELF implementation, making a strong case for ELF-aware teaching and providing helpful guidelines to be used in classroom teaching. It does not provide much theoretical account of ELF research findings. It concentrates on useful practical applications of ELF approach in classroom. Taking on board various aspects of ELF-oriented instruction, the papers collected in the volume provide a comprehensive account of the ELF-aware approach, exposing the difficulties to be faced as well as its advantages and suggesting that EFL teaching oriented towards learners' needs cannot disregard ELF. The great strength of the book is in giving readers a lot of practical advice on how to integrate ELF in their teaching context. It should be of interest not only to ELT teachers but also other stakeholders, namely materials writers, syllabus and test designers, and teacher educators. The book is clearly structured. As the editors point out, it may be used in teacher training courses and seminars. Each chapter includes learning objectives, expected outcomes, a list of key concepts, reflective questions with suggested answers at the end, discussion points and further bibliography. It is the reflective questions, in my estimation, included in each of the chapters that prove immensely valuable: they help readers to check their understanding of the content and to reflect on their own experience and on the teaching context in which they function. It may be easily incorporated in distance learning. All in all, the book may constitute a valuable source of knowledge and inspiration for many in-service and pre-service teachers.

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