

EIL, ELF, Global English: Teaching and Learning Issues

Cesare Gagliardi, Andrew Maley (eds).

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This volume is an anthology of contributions to the debate which has intensified in the last decade around World Englishes, English as an International Language (EIL) and English as a Lingua Franca (ELF). The questions the volume raises concern how English can be taught to global English speakers, whether it can be taught as an international language and if this is worth teaching. Issues involved with identifying an EIL/ELF variety and an EIL/ELF standard are also discussed.

The book opens with an introduction comprising a brief background to its origin and an overview of the contents of each of its eighteen chapters, and is divided into four sections: i) EIL, ELF, Global English; ii) Teaching issues; iii) Learning issues; and iv) The ELF teacher/student. As these divisions indicate, English language teachers and student teachers comprise the main target audience and will find this volume particularly useful, but it provides interesting and informative reading for anyone with an awareness of the challenges facing language use in our increasingly globalised society.

Section I, “EIL, ELF, Global English”, opens the debate with two chapters which present opposing views of the issues that are raised by the dominance of English as a means of communication. ALAN MALEY begins by introducing the reality of EIL and comparing this with the effort of some researchers to identify the features of ELF as an emerging variety. He approaches the problem from the viewpoint of a teacher who must answer the three questions: What are the claims upon which the ELF project is based? Do they stand up to scrutiny? How can teachers best cope with the diversity resulting from the global spread of English? Maley’s stance to ELF is decidedly critical. He claims that for both learners and teachers, it is important to have a recognized and reliable model upon which to build. While recognizing the value of raising learners’ awareness of the existence of other forms, he concludes that the position of ELF in the “strong” form is statistically unreliable, theoretically untenable and practically unworkable. In the second chapter of this section, GIUSEPPE G. CASTORINA pleads for

linguistic equality and proposes an English Euroregister which draws upon the linguistic and lexical commonalities of our European heritage. He insists that according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) the aim of language instruction is not to achieve native-speaker-like competence, but a plurilingual competence that prioritizes intelligibility. He promotes English, a hybrid language, as a suitable vehicle for the transition to plurilingualism.

Section II, “Teaching issues”, comprises six chapters covering topics like teacher education, classroom strategies and course books. LUCILLA LOPRIORE discusses the changing situation for English language teachers which results from a combination of the increasing diffusion and importance of English in its various forms, together with increased migration. Her main focus is language teacher education courses at university level and the implications for non-native teachers. Based on the case of L2 learners of English in Italy, who typically are at the centre of Kachru’s Expanding Circle, the issue that SHARON HARTLE addresses is what makes a variant form acceptable or not. Hartle’s conclusions are that learners need a standard model of English from which they can build their own, more personalized variety, and that the role of the teacher is to empower them to this end. NANCY ROSE STEINBECK’s contribution focuses on oral language skills and how these should be developed. It is her contention that these skills, essential to the development of literacy, have generally been neglected. Language learners need a clear and consistent speech model, and the role of the teacher is to provide a scaffold. STEFANIA TAVIANO’S contribution is part of a larger research project which investigates the pedagogy of translation. Taviano suggests that editing exercises can be useful, as they facilitate the development of a critical attitude and can also be a first step in the process of teaching translation. STEVE BUCKLEDEE analyses three course books in detail to discover what concessions they make to non-native pronunciation models. He finds that despite the fact that the phonology of ELF has been researched and codified, there is a disappointing lack of non-native models. He suggests three main reasons for this, including the demands of internationally recognized exams. PAOLOA VETTOREL’S well-researched chapter investigates the representation of culture in textbooks and raises the question of which aspects of culture should be considered today. She concludes that textbooks are beginning to encompass a wider view of culture, which might help people to go beyond the “them/us” barrier.

The five chapters that make up Section III, “Learning issues”, focus on learning issues and take a learner perspective, considering language transfer, pronunciation and cognition. Based on a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the University of Cassino Corpus of Language Transfer, ENRICO GRAZZI looks into language transfer as a constituent aspect of English as a Global Language. He discusses the concept of deviation and to what extent this is acceptable, and considers the specific pedagogic implications which this has on the learning process. MARIA GRAZIA BUSÀ presents a well-researched investigation into aspects of L2 pronunciation by comparing prosodic patterns in English sentences produced by native and by Italian speakers. The aim of her study is to discover whether different prosodic systems can affect intelligibility and successful communication, and what the repercussions of these systems might be for native speakers of English. RAFAEL MONROY-CASAS investigates emerging pronunciation standards and discusses Jenkins’ “optimum pronunciation model”. Based on the results of an experiment conducted with native Spanish speakers, he particularly queries her claims for the importance of vowel length. KYRIA FINARDI discusses in depth the role that working memory and individual cognitive limitations may play in language learning, and provides an extensive overview of both L1 and L2 Information Processing Theory and Information Processing and language. Referring to the research carried out by previous scholars, she points out that in L2, proficiency is usually assessed by fluency and thus, of the four language abilities that are usually taught, speaking seems to be the most important. She also discusses at some length Swain’s Output Hypothesis and the role of output in the development of fluency. RONGCAI YANG is also interested in cognition and looks at the difficulties that Chinese students face when learning English vocabulary. He ends his contribution by reporting briefly on an experiment in vocabulary learning that is supported by a processing model which aims to transform the way that learners think about words.

Section IV, “The ELF teacher/student”, presents five different views of what English should be taught and of the demands that are put on the language teacher. LUCIANA PEDRAZZINI and ANDREA NAVA report the results of an exploratory study into the use of ELF among a small group of English language teachers from different L1 backgrounds working in Italian schools and whom she sees as “intercultural speakers”. Their main aim was to ascertain how much the English that the teachers produced outside their working situation resembled or diverged from ELF. The authors conclude

that it is important to raise language teachers' awareness of the features of the varieties of English that they master. NICOS SIFAKIS and ARETI-MARIA SOUGARI attempt to connect the attitudes and beliefs of teachers working on the periphery of the expanding circle with the demands and challenges of designing an in-service ELF teacher education program in Greece. They believe that ELF teacher training programs need to raise awareness of the changing and global nature of English, and that teachers need to be encouraged to move away from inner-circle native speaker norms towards the requirements of communication today. The findings from MUSTAFA ZÜLKÜF ALTAN's investigation into the beliefs held among Turkish ELT students on the role that English, Global English and Globalization play are rather unexpected. He concludes that research into how English language teachers think is needed. VANESSA LEONARDI discusses the pedagogical issues that arise from the question of which English should be taught in classrooms, and posits that language cannot be taught without standard models. She lists a number of pedagogical suggestions to support the compromise between standardness and intelligibility. ANNA ZANFEI is interested in testing, and also believes that a native speaker standard is necessary. Although opposed to the strong form of ELF, she proposes that receptive competence in other varieties could also be recognized.

A great number of positions are explicated and defended in this thought-provoking volume, whose eighteen papers make a useful contribution to the debate around the role and status of English and its numerous varieties. The contributions are varied and stimulate reflection and discussion. The volume is organized into four sections; however, I would have found chapter numbers useful.

The Italian situation, at the heart of Kachru's expanding circle, is certainly highly relevant in the context of the ELF, EIL, Global English debate, but is perhaps over-represented here, as thirteen of the contributors are Italian or work in an Italian context. More importantly, the quality of the contributions is very uneven. While many of the papers are well-written and well-researched, this is unfortunately not true of all of them. As the volume is dedicated to the ELF, EIL, Global English debate, I appreciate that the language of the contributions reflects this. However, concession to non-native English does not imply that carelessness should be accepted, and a number of contributions would have benefited from a more thorough proof-reading. Certain contributors are inconsistent in their use of references, and authors and works mentioned in the body of the text do not

appear in the list of references. A further problem is that in some contributions, there is a lack of balance between the background or introduction and the actual research question and results. The most serious criticism however, is that some contributions build upon weak empirical foundations and make claims that are unsubstantiated and in some cases, erroneous. This is a serious failing in a volume which purports to address a scientific debate.

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