

# ELF Awareness in English Language Teaching: Principles and Processes

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The article proposes a framework for integrating English as a lingua franca (ELF) research in English language teaching (ELT), predominantly pedagogy, but also teacher education, materials development and evaluation, policy design and planning, assessment and testing. The main concept here is ELF awareness, which orientates a set of principles that refer to the knowledge, attitudes, and skillset of ELT stakeholders and ELT products with regard to issues and concerns raised in the ELF (and, by extension, the English as an international language and the World Englishes) research literature, and the extent to which they have relevance for local ELT contexts. The article makes the case that ELF awareness does not characterize a unique instructional approach to teaching and learning, but integrates the learner- and learning-centred ‘ESP approach’ put forward by English for specific purposes scholars in the 1980s and widely accepted subsequently in ELT. Furthermore, ELF awareness is viewed as a continuum that depicts the gradual transformation of stakeholders’ attitudes, to the extent that local contexts and stakeholders’ needs and wants allow.

*ELF is not a thing. It is a way.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The global spread of English has given rise to the study of its use by people who choose it as a vehicle of communication. The study of English as a lingua franca (ELF), as such communication has been termed, has focused on analysing the discourse produced by speakers who do not share a first language (e.g. Cogo and Dewey 2012). To that end, the various ELF corpora that have been developed (e.g. VOICE, ELFA, ACE)<sup>1</sup> have been extremely informative. This type of research has yielded significant insights not only regarding the discourse used but, even more significantly, the speakers themselves, what they know, and what they can do with English and other languages they may know and share during their interactions, and the on-the-go decisions they make to render their discourse comprehensible to other non-native and native speakers (Seidlhofer 2011; Mauranen 2012; Jenkins 2015).

In the early days, ELF scholars focused primarily on delineating the ELF construct itself (cf. Seidlhofer 2004; Jenkins 2012). Progressively, it became

clear that ELF raises implications for the English language teaching (ELT) classroom, in the sense that learners can benefit from developing into confident and efficient non-native users of English. By extension, English language teachers, teacher educators, testing experts, curriculum designers, and policy makers (henceforth called ‘ELT stakeholders’) operating in diverse contexts can begin to think about using ELF both as a way of evaluating established instructional practices, textbooks, curricula, policies, and tests and as an opportunity for developing innovative teaching, learning, policy, and testing practices that are informed by ELF research.

However, adapting ELF issues and concerns in ELT is far from straightforward. ELF is already a complex phenomenon and any attempt to integrate it in ELT is bound to be impacted by stakeholders’ attitudes and established ELT practices fuelled by the predominance of native-speakerist perspectives. In what follows, I present the case for what has been termed the ELF-aware perspective to integrating ELF in ELT (Bayyurt and Sifakis 2015a, 2015b). I begin by defining ELF awareness and analyse its three components: awareness of language and language use, awareness of instructional practice, and awareness of learning. I then discuss three implications of ELF that are fundamental in ELF awareness. The first deals with its relevance to and function in ELT pedagogy—I suggest that ELF is not teachable and consider the ramifications for ELT. The second implication concerns the extent to which there is a separate ‘ELF approach’ in teaching—I suggest that a useful way to perceive this is the ‘ESP approach’ developed in the 1980s. The third implication refers to the centrality of ELT stakeholders’ attitudes and underlines the integral role of gradual change and (ultimate) transformation of these attitudes in ELF awareness. Finally, I suggest a dual continuum of ELF awareness that refers to teachers’ awareness of notional ELF issues and of their own actions in the ELT classroom and present a series of principles of ELF awareness that are relevant for ELT.

## 2. DEFINING ELF AND ELF AWARENESS

In its simplest form, ELF can be defined as the discourse produced in interactions involving speakers of different first languages. In this way, ELF typically works in multilingual and multicultural settings and is independent of norms that are culturally and historically associated with Standard English (Cogo and Jenkins 2010; Seidlhofer 2010). Another term that has been used to refer to the global use of English is English as an international language (EIL, cf. Alsagoff *et al.* 2012 and Matsuda 2012). I see EIL as a superordinate term that encompasses ELF, which specifically focuses on the Expanding Circle. EIL incorporates World Englishes (WE), which refers to the emerging indigenized varieties of English that have developed in the Outer Circle, that is, contexts that have close historical links with the UK or the USA (on the links between ELF and WE, see the special issue of *World Englishes*, 2012, 28/2). While my focus in this article is ELF, I will also be referring to EIL and WE

where necessary. I acknowledge the different perspectives between ELF, EIL, and WE, but my attempt here is to maximize the valuable insights that they offer of the interactions involving people with different L1 backgrounds (in the Inner, Outer, or Expanding Circles) for the ELT classroom.

The defining feature of ELF is its linguistic, pragmatic, and cultural flexibility as a means of communication that is appropriated by individual interlocutors under specific communicative circumstances (Seidlhofer 2011; Mauranen 2012; Jenkins 2015). The focus, therefore, is not so much on language itself, but on the context of interaction and the users of ELF, 'the community rather than the code' (Kalocsai 2014: 2), the 'discourse communities with a common communicative purpose' (Seidlhofer 2011: 87). This raises interesting observations with regard to what people do with English when they communicate, and involves an understanding of the 'unusually complex contact' scenarios (Mauranen 2012: 29) between English and the other languages involved that render ELF a 'second-order language contact' (*ibid.*), or a 'hybrid of similects' (Mauranen 2012: 30). These situations develop a fluid 'trans-semiotic system with many meaning-making signs, primarily linguistic ones, that combine to make up a person's semiotic repertoire' (García and Wei 2014: 42) and are compatible with the notion of translanguaging (García 2009; García and Wei 2014). These contexts form a complex communication terrain of 'English as a multilingual franca [...] in which English is available as a contact language of choice, but is not necessarily chosen' (Jenkins 2015: 73).

The ELF construct delineates a complex area of study. The notion of ELF awareness is intended to serve as an understanding of the engagement of teachers and learners, as well as of other ELT stakeholders (e.g. policy makers, curriculum designers, textbook developers, evaluators and testers) with that construct. The benefits of linking ELF with the ELT classroom spring from a perception of the English language learner as an efficient user of English in their own right. In a world where interactions in English among speakers of different L1 abound, the ability to interact efficiently, by accommodating to other interlocutors' cognitive and communicational needs, are important. These communication strategies that underlie successful ELF-oriented interactions can inform the foreign or second language classroom (EFL/ESL), thereby benefiting non-native learners. However, as ELF scholars have shown (e.g. Seidlhofer 2011; Mauranen 2012; Jenkins 2015), understanding ELF necessitates getting to grips with a fair amount of theorizing that may not be immediately accessible to individuals other than applied linguists and discourse analysts. I will return below to the concept itself and why it, rather than another term, has been chosen to represent this engagement with ELF.

Taking teachers as a point of departure, ELF awareness is defined as follows:

the process of engaging with ELF research and developing one's own understanding of the ways in which it can be integrated in one's classroom context, through a continuous process of critical reflection, design, implementation and evaluation of instructional

activities that reflect and localize one's interpretation of the ELF construct. (Sifakis and Bayyurt 2018: 459)

As a notion, ELF awareness is not monolithic but changes in form and scope depending on the stakeholder (Seidlhofer 2011). That said, ELF awareness has the following three major components:

- (a) *Awareness of language and language use.* Learners become aware of ELF discourse, of the elements that differentiate it from native-speaker English and of the reasons underlying this differentiation. This involves an engagement with language (Svalberg 2009) that is both conscious or explicit (Alderson *et al.* 1997) and subconscious or implicit (Schmidt 1994), and refers to knowledge of the syntactic, morphological, lexical, phonological, pragmatic, and sociocultural features of English produced in interactions involving non-native users both inside and outside the ELT classroom. Two of the processes that are of interest in ELF awareness are sensitivity and noticing, which refer to alertness and orientation to stimuli and their processing by language users (cf. Mackey *et al.* 2000: 474). Of particular importance in becoming ELF-aware is developing an awareness of the processes of languaging (the process of using communication strategies, such as negotiation, to produce meaningful interactions—Swain 2006: 98) and translanguaging (the process of using multiple linguistic and nonlinguistic resources to ensure efficient communication between multilingual interlocutors—García and Wei 2014). As ELF refers to functions, structures, discourse, and interactions of English that creatively and justifiably deviate from standard norms (Cogo and Dewey 2012), it is essential that ELT stakeholders also develop an awareness of their own perceptions about normativity, appropriateness, comprehensibility, and ownership of English by native and non-native users alike.
- (b) *Awareness of instructional practice.* A major form of this component of ELF awareness is awareness of teacher-related practice, which revolves around what teachers do (and do not do) in the classroom and includes their personal theories about instruction, corrective feedback (Lyster and Saito 2010), and gauging and responding to learners' needs. Again, perceptions and attitudes about normativity, the notion of error (Long 1991), and its sources (i.e. L1 transfer, omission, and overgeneralization or simplification of L2 rules—cf. Ellis 2008) are a central concern, as is the role of teachers as perceived and experienced by themselves and by other stakeholders in their local context (Sifakis 2009). Other forms of instructional practice awareness are textbook- and policy-related. Both of these forms involve an awareness of the extent to which the teaching situation is orientated towards a specific goal (e.g. passing a high-stakes exam) and whether instructional materials and 'endorsed' instructional practices prioritize a norm-bound (Sifakis 2004) approach.
- (c) *Awareness of learning.* This component of ELF awareness refers to the major impact ELF use has for learning. As English increasingly becomes an integral part of day-to-day, face-to-face, online, or offline interactions involving, but not restricted to, non-native users, it is appropriated by

them and, as a result, ceases to be a foreign language for them, in the sense that other languages are foreign to their learners (Ehlich 2009: 27). In this way, learners attending typical English as a foreign language (EFL) classes are users of ELF (Seidlhofer 2011), and these experiences with ELF play an important, even a primary, role in their learning (Seidlhofer 2011: 189, 2015: 25). These experiences are often not acknowledged by teachers, textbook designers, testers, and policy makers (Jenkins 2007; Seidlhofer 2011, 2015; Sifakis 2009) and are a priority in ELF awareness.

Based on the above, it is possible to make the following three observations about the implications of ELF awareness for ELT.

### 3. OBSERVATION 1—RAISING ELF AWARENESS INSTEAD OF TEACHING ELF

The first observation concerns the extent to which ELF can be taught and, if so, what aspects of it can enter an ELF curriculum. According to Jenkins (Jenkins 2015), the development of the ELF construct has followed three phases: ‘ELF-1’ (late 1990s and early 2000s) focused on codifying ELF varieties with the express aim of legitimizing ELF and, eventually, rendering it teachable. ‘ELF-2’ (mid-2000s to early-2010s) shifted the focus from ELF use to ELF users. This meant departing from a description of the observable features of ELF interactions (although these never ceased to be the object of study) to the processes underlying ELF users’ use of functions and structures (Seidlhofer 2009). This resulted in understanding ELF as an inherently fluid and unbounded means of communication that ‘transcends boundaries, and that is therefore beyond description’ (Jenkins 2015: 55). Finally, the more recent orientation of ELF (‘ELF-3’) is grounded in the need to theorize ELF within the complex context of multilingualism (Mauranen 2012) and translanguaging (Jenkins 2015).

What are the implications of the above for teachers and teaching? During ELF-1, ELF scholars were not particularly keen on deliberating about pedagogy; teachers would have to wait until the ELF construct was fully configured (Seidlhofer 2004: 209). The debate about pedagogy started to develop during ELF-2, but the focus now was not so much on pedagogy itself but on the challenges that ELF research raised for teachers. As long as pedagogical practices and perspectives are norm-dependent (Llurda 2009), ‘ELF research findings pose substantial challenges to current beliefs and practice, [and] it is likely that further engagement with ELF in the language classroom will be contested and hence gradual’ (Jenkins *et al.* 2011: 305). Despite the difficulties of integrating ELF in the foreign language classroom, however, it is clear that the feeling among ELF scholars was less one of ELF displacing EFL but increasingly one of ELF working *within* EFL. Still, though, the tendency was not to interfere with teaching *per se* (Jenkins 2012: 492).

Nevertheless, broad frameworks for integrating ELF in the language classroom have been suggested. Focusing on East and Southeast Asia, Kirkpatrick’s

'ELF approach' targets successful use of English in multilingual contexts by interculturally competent users (2012: 135). Mirroring Kachru's (1983: 238–9) idea of a 'polymodel' approach to the teaching of English, Dewey (2012) and Blair (2015) outline the essentials of a 'post-normative' pedagogical approach that prioritizes a 'post-native' model of learner multicompetence. Kohn goes further to suggest a 'reconciliation between ELT and ELF' by putting forward a social constructivist "'my English" conceptualization' that allows for a 'pedagogical space' that empowers learners to develop their own 'ELF-specific creativity' (Kohn 2015: 51).

What the above research shows is that, as ELF, in all its fluidity, 'is beyond description' (Jenkins 2015: 55), we should not expect any sort of codification of it in the form of dictionaries and grammar books, at least not in the ways that teachers have been familiar with when teaching EFL (with the notable exception of Walker 2010). Rather, findings from the extensive studies of what ELF users know and how they interact should inform lesson plans, teacher training curricula, textbooks, policies, and assessment procedures in ways that will render the ELT experience richer and deeper, and closer to a realistic experience of what has come to be global communication via English.

Along these lines, ELF scholars have looked into possible connections between ELF, WE, and EIL, and major domains in ELT. Thus, Dewey (2012) evaluated the impact of ELF on teacher qualification programmes in the UK in terms of language accuracy, correctness, context, and teacher autonomy. Similarly, Cavalheiro (2016) considered the native-speakerist perspectives of participants from five Portuguese MA programmes. Vettorel and Lopriore (2013) looked at how ELF and WE impacts 10 textbooks implemented in Italian secondary schools. Focusing on Japan, Takahashi (2014) studied the ELF-oriented features of ELT textbooks for 7th and 11th graders. Siqueira critiqued the 'pedagogical Disneyland' of international textbooks which are out of touch with learners' experiences (Siqueira 2015: 244). Vettorel (2016) highlighted the importance of international school partnerships in fostering younger learners' intercultural competence and enhancing their self-confidence as ELF users. Insights about the impact of ELF on testing (Jenkins 2006; Newbold in print) and alternative assessment (Tsagari and Kouvdou in print) have also been put forward. What these approaches show is that ELF research has reached a level of maturity that has rendered it an important research domain in itself, with significant insights for other applied linguistics domains.

The fact that the 'older' version of ELF (ELF-1) is not 'teachable' is a blessing in disguise for those teachers who are favourable to it, because, if ELF-1 was a reality (i.e. if ELF was narrowed down to a codified communication system, perhaps in the form of one or more WE varieties), then it would have to battle against the formidable fortresses of EFL, with its strong Standard English codification and an army of favourable attitudes and interests (e.g. high-stakes exam certifications) on its side. But since ELF (in its older form) is not teachable, it can never be pitted against EFL, it does not have to. Teachers do not

have to 'buy into' the ELF-1 concept of ELF—if they did, then ELF would never succeed as an either/or case against EFL. What must be enquired is not *whether* teachers, textbooks, curricula endorse the ELF perspective but *to what extent* and *why* they do/do not. This is precisely what the notion of ELF awareness offers: the capability and choice to decide the extent to which ELF and EFL can be linked depending on the idiosyncrasies of each specific context.

#### 4. OBSERVATION 2—ADOPTING THE ESP APPROACH TO ELF AWARENESS

The fact that ELF, at discourse or variety level ('ELF-1' in Jenkins' terminology), is not teachable need not mean that ELF cannot be integrated in teaching. It is not a question of whether ELF will replace EFL but *how much* (and *what aspects*) of ELF will go into EFL. It is essentially a question of *degree*. And this is where ELF awareness comes in, as a means of gauging how much ELT stakeholders (teachers, curriculum and courseware designers, policy makers and testing experts, even learners themselves) are willing or allowed to withstand the great challenges that the ELF construct (ELF-2 and ELF-3) raises for their inherently strong perceptions about the centrality of normativity and standardness (Jenkins 2007). ELF awareness also means that, while ELF2/3 tenets need to be considered, there are no set or predetermined 'right' solutions in ELF-aware lessons or curricula or textbooks. Each will be determined with reference to the local context, the target situation of each teaching context, and learners' needs and wants.

The predominance of context, target situation, and learners' needs are the ingredients of the so-called 'ELF approach' (Kirkpatrick 2012). However, the same ingredients formed the backbone of the 'ESP approach' developed in the 1980s by Hutchinson and Waters (1987). The ESP (English for specific purposes) domain is extremely diverse. It would be impossible to provide here a fully comprehensive definition of the term (see Dudley-Evans and St John 1998: 2–3). The term ESP has been used to refer to teaching English (structure, functions, skills) relevant for a particular discipline or occupation (e.g. academic discourse, business, tourism, medical professionals). In its broader understanding, ESP has also been used to refer to any teaching that is tailored to meet the (cognitive, affective, linguistic, communicational) needs of individuals attending a course for a particular purpose; this was the way Hutchinson and Waters perceived the 'ESP approach' to teaching English. To the extent that the 'ELF approach' can be understood as an embodiment of the ESP approach (and there are reasons why I suggest this—see below), the former is in no way a new 'method' or 'approach' to teaching, in the sense that Richards and Rodgers (2014) have given to these terms.

The 'ESP approach' has been influential for ESP courses and more general purpose (English for general purpose, EGP) courses. For example, the 'primacy of need' helped establish features centrally in Dudley-Evans and St John's

definition of ESP (Dudley-Evans and St John 1998: 2–3), in Basturkmen's appreciation of the importance of learning in developing ESP courses (Basturkmen 2006: 5), and in the definition of 'purpose' in the orientation of Languages for Specific Purposes (LSP) in Gollin-Kies *et al.* (2015).

It is not my intention here to generalize and identify the full links between ESP and ELF. I am pointing out that there are affinities between the two domains that must be acknowledged and merit further research. Recent accounts of ESP share many of the concerns raised in ELF research about the 'blurred distinctions between NNS & NS', 'codeswitching and multilingualism' (e.g. Gollin-Kies *et al.* 2015: 30), or the 'de-anglicization' of English and the detrimental effects of aiming at native speaker competence (Nickerson 2013: 456). In what follows I am making a more specific case. I am pointing out that the 'ESP approach' can be instructive for our understanding of the ELF awareness construct and, by extension, of the way in which ELF can be linked with ELT.

There are four reasons why the 'ESP approach' is relevant to delineating the ELF awareness construct. First, in terms of defining language—the way language is perceived by Hutchinson and Waters is strikingly similar to Jenkins' definitions of ELF:

The fact that language is used for a specific purpose does not imply that it is a special form of language, different in kind from other forms. Certainly, there are some features which can be identified as 'typical' of a particular context of use [...]. But these differences should not be allowed to obscure the far larger area of common ground that underlies all English use, and indeed, all language use. (Hutchinson and Waters 1987: 18)

Secondly, in terms of communication and learning. Regarding communication, their claim that 'there is much more to communication than just the surface features that we read and hear' (p. 18) also resonates with focusing on the underlying strategies ELF users apply during successful interactions (i.e. Jenkins' definitions of ELF-2/3). Regarding learning, it is at the epicentre, as 'all decisions as to content and method are based on the learner's reason for learning' (p. 19). The ESP approach prioritizes learner centredness and places teaching in the service of learners' needs. This implies that, as ELF usage expands to more and more domains (e.g. Grau 2009), learners' perspectives about the legitimacy of ELF as a justifiable component of their ELT experience are also likely to change (and there is evidence to suggest this, cf. Ranta 2010; Kormos *et al.* 2011). It also means that teachers', textbook developers', and curriculum designers' perspectives and decisions are also likely to change to adapt to these emerging needs.

Thirdly, in terms of instruction—the perspective of Hutchinson and Waters that ESP teaching methodology and ESP learning is not different from that used in EGPs also applies to ELF:

Though the content of learning may vary there is no reason to suppose that the processes of learning should be any different for the ESP learner than for the General English learner. (*ibid.*)



In other words, we should not see ELF as a wholly different way of teaching. The same processes that hold true for teaching EFL are adopted for integrating ELF as well (for example, the importance of designing tasks that prompt authentic interactions amongst learners).

Fourthly, in terms of integrating ELF within ELT. Just as EGP can gain from the ESP approach of Hutchinson and Waters' by becoming more learner centred, so can ELT contexts gain from the integration of ELF by raising the ELF awareness levels of practitioners and products. As mentioned above, though, the extent of that integration will vary depending on the circumstances. For example, teachers working in a context that adopts a loose outlook to learning are more likely to be allowed (by their schoolmaster) to integrate ELF-aware activities in their lessons than their colleagues working in a context that is focused on preparing learners for a high-stakes exam. In the latter context the syllabus is very specifically native-speaker-oriented (and so are learners' expectations) and does not allow deviations, whereas in the former context the seeming lack of a comprehensive syllabus can give teachers the opportunity to develop an ELF-aware intervention and tailor it to their learners' profile.

In many ways, therefore, Widdowson's statement that 'English as an international language is English for specific purposes' (Widdowson 1994: 144) holds true. In this light, perhaps the best way to conceptualize the ESP approach to ELF-aware teaching and curriculum designing is by adopting the *ecological perspective* proposed by Holliday (1984). The main purpose of the ecological approach is raising teachers' critical awareness of the entire ecosystem surrounding their teaching situation, including its wider social and institutional features and specific constraints or problems. ELF-aware teachers and curriculum designers are sensitive to competing but interdependent demands that their local ecosystem needs satisfied to survive, and these include class size, times allocated for teaching, the broader institutional and local classroom 'climate', staff profiles, target situation analysis, and, needless to say, attitudes (expressed or otherwise) towards ELF. The end result is a dynamic, recurrent interplay of *negotiations* involving purpose, syllabus, method, and evaluation within a milieu of attitudes and expectations of everyone involved. ELF-aware teachers adopting the ecological approach make best use of local features, assuring their projects' long-term viability, the aim being to work *with* the system rather than *against* it (ELF *within* EFL rather than *replacing* EFL).

According to this ecological perspective, the ELF-aware teacher is someone who understands the local culture and, to paraphrase Swales (1989), is fully aware of the following four parameters:

- What they can 'afford' to do—for example, 'I can treat my own non-native speaker's spoken discourse as a viable model my learners can aspire to, and use it to help them become ELF-aware, and therefore more confident of their own spoken discourse'; 'I can focus my learners'

attention on strategies of non-native speakers in interactions with other native or nonnative speakers’.

- What they cannot ‘afford’ to do—for example, ‘I am not “allowed” to bring in other textbooks or materials in my exam prep class’.
- What they can ‘afford’ not to do—for example, ‘It is OK for me to not insist, or even to exclude, certain native speaker pronunciation models from my pronunciation class, following Jenkins’ *Lingua Franca Core*’ (Walker 2010); ‘I do not intervene to correct my learners’ pronunciation errors that do not hinder comprehensibility during certain oral communication activities’.
- What they cannot ‘afford’ not to do—for example, ‘I cannot avoid using certain prescribed textbooks in my class!’

This brings us to using the term ‘ELF-aware’ to define the extent to which stakeholders (e.g. teachers, learners, curriculum and textbook designers, policy makers) and products (e.g. teaching materials, curricula, and syllabi) sanction ELF-oriented principles and practices. Another term that could be used in this context is ‘ELF-informed’ (Seidlhofer 2015). However, the ‘informed practitioner’ within the post-method paradigm (Kumaravadivelu 1994) is the teacher who is knowledgeable about and eclectic with the methods and practices of the various established methodologies in ELT (e.g. communicative language teaching, task-based learning), and has the autonomy to select those aspects of these methodologies to construct an appropriate pedagogy that is relevant for her very specific teaching context. Therefore, the term ‘ELF-informed’ would imply that ELF scholars have developed a methodologically distinct system of pedagogy, when, as we have seen, this is not the case. As the focus of ELF research is predominantly the increased understanding of what makes interactions involving non-native users ‘work’, we should be talking about how that research can impact what teachers, textbook designers, policy makers, etc. should know to begin to integrate those principles in their teaching, textbooks, and policies. This is why I am proposing an ‘ELF-aware’, rather than an ‘ELF-informed’, perspective. What is more, being informed implies a ‘closed’ system where teachers are at the receiving end and is therefore better suited to established ELT practices; while being aware implies an ‘open’ system where teachers are autonomous in co-constructing appropriate ELF-related methodologies with and for their learners and are therefore better suited to ELF practices.

## 5. OBSERVATION 3—ELF AWARENESS AS GRADUAL TRANSFORMATION OF ATTITUDES

Along with descriptions of ELF, in all its phases, another major concern of ELF-related research has been the attitudes, perceptions, and beliefs of ELT stakeholders (most importantly, teachers and learners) towards, among other things, normativity, communication involving non-native users, or the roles of teachers in the ELT classroom (Jenkins 2007). This is why ELF scholars have

underlined the need for *change*, for involving teachers in a re-appreciation of these beliefs. Widdowson invites teachers 'to consider [ELF's] effect as a catalyst for change in established ways of thinking [...] in the description and the teaching of English' (Widdowson 2012: 5). Park and Wee concur that teachers should 'question some of the more deeply rooted assumptions we hold about language' (Park and Wee 2011: 368). Seidlhofer cautions that, as norms are 'continually shifting and changing', teachers should replace their 'normative mindset' on that basis (Seidlhofer 2008: 33–34), and goes on to suggest a series of essential 'shifts' in teachers' perspectives that range from the need to make learners aware of actual language usage to the importance of making them self-confident as users (Seidlhofer 2011). As we have seen above, this need for change is coupled with learners' apparent readiness for more ELF-oriented teaching.

This discourse of change comes at a time when, in ELT, communication is perceived less in terms of linguistic form and increasingly in terms of its extensive variability in diverse contexts, with 'language events and experiences [being] central rather than language as form and meaning' (Blommaert 2010: 100). Understanding how norms are developed is also informed by the study of the fluidity and dynamism of interactivities between local and global communities (Canagarajah 2005; Pennycook 2007).

This means that the need for a re-appreciation of established beliefs and practices, through appropriately organized teacher education programmes, are at the centre of the ELF-aware perspective. As the focus is raising teachers' awareness of the changing tides in ELT, the ELF construct becomes a wonderful opportunity for ESOL teacher education (Sifakis 2014). As teachers become aware of the various issues and challenges that ELF raises for communication and pedagogy, teachers are prompted to engage in a reflective dialogue *both* with their specific and broader teaching context *and* with their own deeper beliefs and convictions about language, communication, and their own role in the ELT classroom. The target is not necessarily to completely change teachers' perspective if they are reluctant to do so—this would be a painstakingly slow process, let alone borderline unethical (cf. Sifakis 2009), but to get to grips with current concerns not just in ELF but in ELT in general, regarding, for example, adjusting pedagogical aims (McKay 2002) and curricular concerns (Matsuda and Friedrich 2011), exploring the role of intercultural competence in language use (Seidlhofer 2007, 2011) and the ELT classroom (Fay *et al.* 2010; Baker 2015; Fay *et al.* 2016), and so on.

Along these lines, an ELF-aware teacher education that is orientated toward change has three phases:

- (a) exposing teachers to ELF, WE, and EIL research and prompting them to reflect on the complexities of English-medium communicative contexts in today's global reality;
- (b) raising their awareness of the challenges those complexities pose for their own teaching context in a critical and hands-on way; and

- (c) involving them in an action plan that would help them integrate pedagogical concerns from EIL, ELF, and WE they consider relevant (and doable) for their own teaching context.

Longer or shorter programmes have been developed that can be seen as examples or case studies of raising teachers' ELF awareness along the above lines. The online programme<sup>2</sup> that runs from 2012 through 2017 at Boğaziçi University in Istanbul, Turkey, adopts a transformative framework to teacher education (Sifakis 2007, 2014) and targets raising Turkish, Greek, Spanish, and Polish teachers' awareness about ELF, WE, and EIL (Sifakis and Bayyurt 2015). The programme prioritizes the development of participants' critical reflection of the issues discussed and prompts their engagement in action research through the design, implementation, and evaluation of original lesson plans that are specifically tailored to participants' local teaching contexts (Bayyurt and Sifakis 2015a, 2015b). Lopriore (2016) presents a similar teacher education programme at an Italian university that aims at enhancing participants' ELF awareness, highlighting participants' initial surprise at the gap between real-world interactions involving non-native users and their EFL Standard-English goals (p. 175). In their own online teacher training programme, Hall *et al.* (2013) focus on making participant teachers aware of the nature and dynamics of English as a plurilithic language. While their study does not have an exclusive ELF focus, it showcases the potentially transformative effect of the awareness-raising process on certain trainees. Finally, in a more recent project carried out in Greece, Kordia (2016) extended the transformative framework of Sifakis (2014) by attempting to establish the different phases of transformation participant teachers went through, as they became ELF-aware.

## 6. THE ELF-AWARENESS CONTINUUM

It is useful to conceive of ELF awareness as a continuum, along which there are different degrees of awareness, ranging from no awareness to full awareness. The continuum, which is strictly notional, has two components, A and B (Figure 1). Part A concerns how much and what teachers *know* about ELF, that is, their awareness of ELF discourse and of the strategies used in ELF interactions. It also concerns their awareness of their local teaching-learning context. Part B concerns how much and what teachers *do* in their classes that is ELF-aware. It relates to the decisions they make (regarding instruction, feedback, etc.) and act upon to render their lessons ELF-aware. This continuum is useful because it can help us perceive (and, more importantly, begin to research) the *degree* of ELF integration within ELT. For example, the continuum implies certain possibilities worth looking into (cf. a-d in Figure 1):

- (a) Teachers know nothing about ELF (A shows no awareness) and do not integrate it in their teaching in any way (the B marker is also at the leftmost side of the continuum).

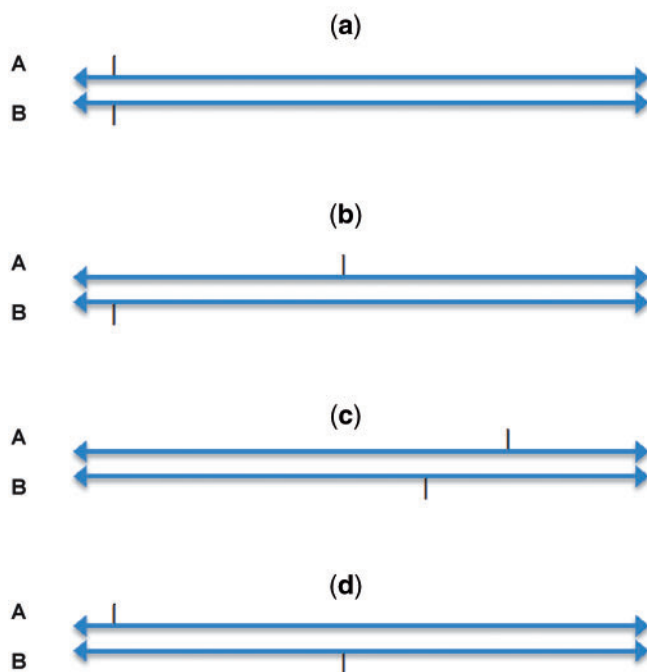


Figure 1: The ELF awareness continuum.

- (b) Teachers know about ELF (A shows some awareness) but refuse to integrate it in their teaching because they disagree with this endeavour (B is at the leftmost side).
- (c) Teachers know about ELF (A shows awareness) and do their best to integrate it in their classrooms, to the extent that their context (learners, target situation, sponsors, director of studies, etc.) allows (depending on the integration of ELF in their teaching the value of B changes).
- (d) Teachers may know nothing about ELF (A shows no awareness) but may unknowingly integrate it in their classes (again, the value of B changes, depending on the integration of ELF in their teaching).

The continuum can help us appreciate the complexity and challenges of applying ELF in the ELT classroom. It has been used in teacher training by the author and has been found to help teachers grasp both the term 'ELF awareness' and also its complexity when thinking about it in practical, context-specific terms. It also draws attention to the ESP approach and the ecological model proposed: knowing about ELF is not enough, teachers must also be fully cognizant of their context. The above possibilities also highlight the importance of teachers being ELF-aware rather than ELF-informed, in the sense that ELF awareness need not be a formal state of full consciousness about ELF matters. As ELF awareness is a question of degree, possibilities

(b) and (d) above, though quite different, are still legitimate cases of ELF awareness. (b) showcases teachers' autonomy in deciding about the usefulness for and applicability of ELF in their own practice—and we should not forget that there are many diverse teaching and learning contexts. As possibility (b) exemplifies, knowing about ELF *does not mean* that we can or want to teach the ELF *way*—in other words, continuum B is a completely separate 'beast'. Possibility (d) shows that the ELF *approach* is not necessarily a new, original, or unique approach to teaching, and that those teachers who have been espousing the ESP approach may already be implementing aspects of the ELF-aware pedagogy in some way and to some extent (along continuum B).

In principle, the ELF awareness concept demands that we keep our minds open. We can have teachers develop ELF-aware activities and we can design ELF-aware curricula, textbooks, and tests, but we should also continue to look for elements of ELF awareness in existing lessons, textbooks, curricula, policies, and tests. In the latter case, the research interest lies in the extent to which these products, which are found in typical ELT or EFL environments, are ELF-aware, which means that researching the background to their ELF awareness can be a research aim in itself. Researching the ELF awareness of ELT stakeholders and products becomes a study of the pedagogy, psychology, and sociology of the contexts where these stakeholders operate and these products are implemented.

## 7. PRINCIPLES OF ELF AWARENESS

What follows is a list of principles of ELF awareness, based on the above. This is not intended to be an exhaustive list of the features intended for ELF-aware analysis in the different ELT departments, which need to be further elaborated.

- ELF-aware pedagogy focuses on prioritizing what structures and functions of English need to be taught, showcasing successful interactions involving non-native users, updating corrective feedback strategies, and reflecting on the role of the teacher as a custodian of standard English and as a role model (be they native or non-native users) for their learners.
- ELF cannot be delimited to a specific codifiable variety that can be taught, in the same way that (codified) varieties can be taught.
- ELF does not designate an either/or case for ELT; it does not seek to replace ELT but to be integrated into it, to a lesser or greater extent, depending on teaching context and stakeholders' attitudes.
- The process of becoming ELF-aware integrates a process of change and transformation of stakeholders' beliefs, attitudes, and practices; it therefore does not prescribe a particular static state one is (or is not) in, but rather a state of continuous growth that is justified with reference to the local ELT context.
- ELF awareness is a question of degree that can be mapped along two continua, one focusing on stakeholders' awareness of the ELF construct (which also includes elements from EIL and WE), the other focusing on their choices and actions with reference to the ELT classroom.

- ELF awareness could be applied with reference to all ELT stakeholders (teachers, learners, parents, sponsors, directors of studies, teacher educators, policy makers, curriculum designers, textbook developers, evaluators, testing experts).
- ELF awareness could also be extended to ELT products (language learning activities and tasks, syllabi, curricula, textbooks, tests, exams).
- ELF awareness can be developed in native and non-native users.
- ELF awareness does not specify a teaching methodology that is distinct from established methodologies; rather, within ELT pedagogy, it adopts the ecological perspective of the ESP approach and demands full and exhaustive awareness of the local context's specifications.
- ELF-aware pedagogy adopts a perspective that departs from treating English as a foreign language and focuses on and builds upon what learners *already do* with English.

## 8. IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

In this article I have presented what I hope is a comprehensive framework for integrating ELF in ELT. I have argued for the integration of ELF-aware pedagogy in the form of the ESP approach in all aspects of ELT, ranging from teaching instruction, through textbook development evaluation and adaptation, curriculum design and evaluation, to testing. The ELF-aware perspective is essentially a set of principles that can be used to describe teachers', learners', and other stakeholders' beliefs and attitudes about ELF concerns, in the evaluation of established teaching and testing practices, and in the appraisal and development of activities, tasks, textbooks, curricula, tests, and foreign language policies. However, orientating the principles of ELF awareness in ELT is only the first step. What further needs to be done is the delineation of a detailed road map and the development of specific criteria for applying the ELF-aware construct in all things ELT. What also needs to be done is looking at specific case studies, and focusing on both ELT stakeholders and products, where the ELF-aware perspective can be applied.

This is where appropriate teacher education programmes are necessary. As shown in the teacher education examples shown earlier, such programmes will raise teachers' ELF awareness by prompting them to critically engage with the ELF literature, develop a full understanding of their teaching context (following the ecological perspective) and design, implement and evaluate ELF-aware tasks and lessons that are relevant and meaningful for their learners. Through this training teachers can learn to implement ELF-aware textbooks and syllabi and to deal with competing commitments and decisions. In this way, ELF-aware teacher education programmes can both contribute to triggering teacher reflexivity and autonomy as well as generate pedagogical investigations that will inform ELF research.

For example, an ELF-aware pedagogy should identify what *specific* actions need to be taken to tangibly show a shift from the native-speakerist model to

the ELF-aware model. It is also important that we have evidence from lesson plans and from actual lesson recordings and transcriptions that can exemplify this shift. In this light, the ecological approach can raise questions about teacher autonomy with respect to the implementation of ELF-aware pedagogy in different ELT contexts. Similarly, ELF-aware teacher education should focus on raising pre-service and in-service teachers' critical awareness of the extent to which their current teaching and learning context is open to change, and prompt them to engage in action research with their classes. ELF-aware courseware are expected to include evidence of successful ELF interactions (gleaned from the ELF corpora available and other available resources) and activities that will raise learners' self-confidence as ELF users and help them to competently engage in interactions involving other native and non-native users. ELF-aware curriculum design can be an opportunity for a truly innovative postmodern ELT curriculum following Burke's (2009) remark that, in order for schooling to maintain its relevance in society, it must integrate out-of-school literacy practices in school contexts.

In all ELT contexts, therefore, to mirror Elbert Hubbard's dictum about art, 'ELF is not a thing; it is a way': ELF is not one specific codifiable variety (a 'thing') but a series of communicational strategies (a 'way'). The essential contribution of ELF for ELT is what has often been described by critics as its greatest disadvantage, namely, that it is not codifiable. Yet, as ELF cannot really be encased in a well-defined, standardized model, any attempt to do it will only succeed if it distances itself from established ELT. This is what lies at the core of the ELF-aware perspective. It views ELF as a problem. And problems help us grow. The concept of ELF awareness can help ELT stakeholders use ELF as a springboard for personal and professional growth and for getting to grips with the postmodern challenges of global communication.

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## NOTES

- 1 VOICE: Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English ([www.univie.ac.at/voice](http://www.univie.ac.at/voice)); ELFA: English as a Lingua Franca in Academic Settings ([www.helsinki.fi/elfa/elfacorporus.html](http://www.helsinki.fi/elfa/elfacorporus.html)); ACE: Asian Corpus of English (<http://corpus.ied.edu.hk/ace>).
- 2 See <http://teacherdevelopment.boun.edu.tr>.

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