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English as a Lingua Franca: Perspectives for English language teaching and for teacher education

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Abstract

This paper argues the significance for adopting English as a Lingua Franca in the teaching of English and proposes three points for its adoption. To translate this big idea into practice, the three components to take are linguistics researches, English teacher education, and English language teaching in the field. The linguistic researches serve to lay foundation and construct understanding of ELF in the Indonesian context. The English teacher education plays its role to disseminate researches and knowledge of ELF to teacher educators and student teachers. The working together of the two elements will manifest in the field where the core practices of ELF truly materialize.

Keywords: ELF, linguistic research, teacher education, language teaching.

Introduction

Have you ever travelled to Berlin and talked to the Germans in English because you do not speak Deutsch, nor your interlocutors speak *Bahasa Indonesia*? Have you ever spoken to the people of Vietnam, Thailand or the Philippines in English merely because you do not have the same first language? This linguistic behavior demonstrates the increasing role of English as a lingua franca. It refers to such communication carried out in English between speakers with different first languages (Seidlhofer, 2005). This linguistic phenomenon will tend to continuously grow as ASEAN regionalization and the internationalization of trade, commerce and even education are underway.

However, there is a paradox on the use of English as a lingua franca (Seidlhofer, 2004, 2005). On the one hand, the vast majority of English users do not involve any native speakers of the language. On the other hand, native speakers remain the dominant reference for its acceptable usage. This situation has led English as a language to reach its “unstable equilibrium” or a linguistic condition where “the majority of the world’s English users are now to be found in countries where it is a foreign language, control over the norms of the language still rests with speakers for whom it is the first language” (Seidlhofer, 2004, p. 209). Statistics reveal that about 80 percent of verbal exchanges in English, either as second or foreign language, do not involve any native speakers of English (Beneke, 1991). In other words, only one in four English users is actually a native speaker of the language (Crystal, 2003).

In response to this growing linguistic phenomenon, many theories are offered, such as English as a global language, English as an international language, and English as a Lingua Franca. English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) is a conceptual term employed to refer to this situation by highlighting the relationship between the global use and spread of English and how it is taught and learned (Jenkins, 2006; Seidlhofer, 2004).

Indonesia is a fecund site for the growth of English as a lingua franca (Sakhiyya, Agustien, & Pratama, 2018). Not least because the position and development of the use of English in

Indonesia is unique, as compared to the neighboring countries such as Malaysia or India. The two countries had been colonized by the British empire and as a consequence of past colonialism, English is now a second language after Malay in Malaysia and Hindi in India. In Indonesia, English has become a lingua franca after Indonesia's national language even without any historical roots in the past (Kirkpatrick, 2010; Murata & Jenkins, 2009). According to Kachru's conceptualization of Outer Circle (1992), Indonesia is the second largest market of English language education (Dardjowidjojo, 2000). The shift to ELF poses major implications to the way English is conceptualized and taught in Indonesian teacher education institutions. What does it take to push this idea forward?

This paper is going to respond to this question by firstly unpacking the concept of English as a Lingua Franca. The second section assesses the current conceptualization of English in the country. The third section elaborates the points for ELF to truly materialize.

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English as a Lingua Franca

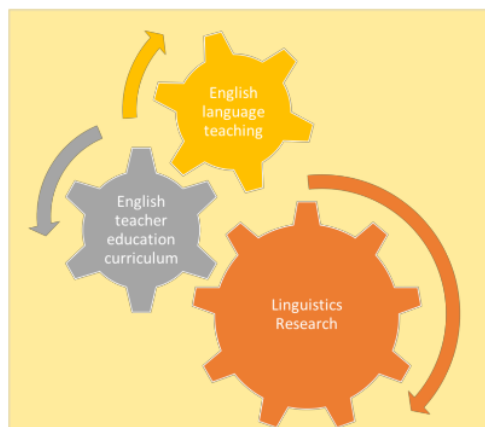
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However, this conceptual understanding of what counts as **English as a lingua franca is only a starting point** for democratizing the use, learning and teaching of English. This is the main problem of ELF: although it offers promising futures for English language teaching and learning, it mainly stays in the philosophical discussion and rarely touches the mundane realities of language teaching and learning (Seidlhofer, 2001). This paper aims to fill this gap by providing a model for thinking about how to translate ELF perspectives and approaches and make them workable in the Indonesian context.

What does it take to translate ELF perspectives?

There are several points to consider if ELF perspectives and approaches truly function. They comprise of relevant elements that construct understanding, diffusion, dissemination and practice of ELF. By breaking down the 'engine' into functional roles, the model provides a useful basis for developing and translating ELF perspectives by different elements. It should be noted, however, that this is just a model, not a rigid empirical description. Among each element may overlap.



Picture 1. A functioning ELF model to translate ELF perspectives

a. ELF researches

While ELF researches have been conducted at a range of linguistic levels particularly lexis, lexicogrammar, pronunciation, and pragmatics (Jenkins, Cogo, & Dewey, 2011); in Indonesia, this issue remains underexplored. Linguistic researches in Indonesia are dominated by a monolithic concept of English (Dardjowidjojo, 2000).

This area of research are best exemplified by Jenkins *et al* (2011). The new emerging courses in the last decade such as English for Business must consider this ELF perspective. Researches on this area like Jenkins *et al* (2011) and Kankaanranta and Planken (2010) found that English for Business setting needs to move away from focusing too much on norms to be more content oriented. The same case with Academic English. By considering the nature of ELF, the spirit is that in order to understand academic speaking, it is vital to rid ourselves of the baggage of academic native English practices (Lillis & Curry, 2010). The first step to reach this goal is by compiling English corpus in the academic setting, just like what Anna Mauranen, the first researcher on this issue, did in the University of Tampere (Mauranen, 2003).

b. English teacher education

The provision and conception of what student teachers need to know and are able to do to carry out the work as English teachers can be seen through the knowledge base (Sakhiyya *et al.*, 2018). This is despite the fact that there are other stakeholders involved in the process, such as government and private companies or industries. According to Johnson (2009), the knowledge base of English language teacher education reflects not only what student teachers need to know, but also the philosophical foundation or perspectives the institutions adopt.

The pedagogical implications of adopting ELF in the English teacher education comprises of using this new perspective in designing and changing the nature of language syllabus, teaching materials, approaches and methods, as well as language assessment (Jenkins, 2006; Murata, 2016; Seidlhofer, 2001). This task might seem ambitious, but it is actually doable. For example, in designing teaching materials for listening courses, including English users from various background (such as Singaporean English – Indonesia's neighbor and Indian English) is a form of recognition that English does not only belong to the United States or England only (Pennycook, 2013).

Teacher educators are kept updated on the new linguistic researches regarding ELF so that they could disseminate the findings to their students. This chain of diffusion of knowledge is critical in ensuring the ELF model to truly function.

c. English language teaching

The real practice of ELF takes place in the classroom where teachers introduce English along with its socio-cultural context. Teachers should look at the way English works as a lingua franca, which is a better representative than native English. In other words, emphasis needs to be given more on mutual intelligibility than correctness (House, 1999; Jenkins *et al.*, 2011). Only teachers with ELF training could carry out this task and bring this nuance in the classroom. Therefore, English teacher education plays a strategic role in this relationship between the linguistic researches and ELF in action.



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