

REZUMATE/ABSTRACTS



ENGLISH BETWEEN ENL AND ELF

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Abstract

Starting from English's international character and Widdowson's statement referring to no possible claim and 'custody' over this language, I have tried to underline a teacher of English as a modern language's position. The difference between L1 – English as a native language (ENL) and English as lingua franca (EFL) has led to some new aspects that implied a change of attitude as to the place ELF is allotted in the description alongside ENL. Teaching English as a modern language imposes a global vision of the process.

Rezumat

Profesorul de limbă trebuie să aleagă uneori între ceea ce se numește limba vorbitorilor nativi și engleza ca limbă străină. Dublu statut de limbă internațională și de lingua franca al limbii engleze pare să ducă la luări de poziție, la schimbări de mentalitate dar și la consecințe în planul dialectic. De aceea predarea-învățarea limbii engleze în zilele noastre impune o viziune globală a procesului.

1. Widdowson's statement on the "international" character of English as a language may not stir things up, unless we pay enough attention to the word "custody". Whatever meaning we can choose as referring to "custody", there are, at least, two terms that explain the role of a teacher arising from such a consequence: *to keep* and *to look after*.

On the other hand, the one who teaches English nowadays faces two main opposing positions regarding the role of the language: the use of English as an international language or the use of English as lingua franca. If English as lingua franca, is seen by the native speakers as a "national achievement", being very much convinced that they should "capitalise" on this "advantage", English as an international language has become independent of its origins.

The academia (as opposed to the domains of business and politics) accepts the latter view (English as an international language) as predominating the current discourse of English studies. Notions as multiculturalism, poly-models and pluricentrism favour "Englishes". Still, the language "English" is largely considered the prime knowledge base and reference point. English as its native speakers use it, either in the UK or in the US is the yardstick against which students' work is assessed (in essays, cultural studies or language proficiency examinations).

What is very striking, however, is that there is hardly any overt reflection about what is analysed in theory and what is done in practice¹.

2. Until recently the only well-documented varieties of L₁ English were British and North American. The International Corpus of English (ICE) is described as "the first large-scale effort to study the development of English as a world language".

The paradox reveals what is happening widely in the world: research is favoured when notions of uniformity and conformity and extralinguistic treatments are coupled with assertions of appropriate pedagogy, local values and the importance of intercultural communications. The computer technology opens undreamt possibilities in language description. This brings us to the starting point discussion: we have an inverse relationship between perceived significance and relevance of English in the world at large and linguistic description.

¹Seidlhofer, 2001, p. 43.

What more and more voices seem to emphasize is the need of a complementary linguistic research. Such an attempt should be focused on the most extensive contemporary use of English worldwide – English as *lingua franca* (ELF). The lack of such a descriptive reality leaves space to the only possible standard, English as a *native language* (ENL). ELF is regarded as a deviation from ENL and ELF speakers as deficient learners of ENL.

According to the researchers and at the same time practitioners of ELT, the attempt to provide a linguistic description of ELT implies:

Ø a change of attitude as to the place ELF is allotted in the description alongside ENL;

Ø a new corpus (the first target being spoken ELF).

The questions that arise from such a change will include the following:

- the most relied – upon and successfully employed grammatical constructions and lexical choices;
- aspects that contribute to smooth communications;
- factors that tend to lead to “ripples”, misunderstanding or communication breakdown;
- the degree of approximation proportional to communicative success;
- commonly used constructions, lexical items which are ungrammatical in Standard L₁ English but generally unproblematic in ELF communications.

The “portrait” or better said the profile of ELF as a viable means of communications may imply, on one hand, simplifications of L₁ English which could constitute systematic features of ELF, and, on the other hand, an index, of communicative redundancy (niceties of social behaviour associated with native-speaker models and identities). Approximation to native speaker norms and expectations not shared in ELF interaction leads to communication problems.

3. The implications for teaching English as ELF in Romania have therefore been huge. They meant a new curriculum designed, new textbooks and new attitudes towards teaching. Local established pedagogic criteria mingled with specific settings and specific purposes that imposed the remove from the syllabus of many time – consuming items.

Teachers of English became textbooks writers. They have been advised by professional British/American consultants that have taken into account Romanian tradition and etiquette, market forces, aesthetic arguments.

Positive perspectives could be left and taken advantages of. Even if there are not clear terminological distinctions between EFL and ENL, there are premises for providing the option of code switching between ENL and ELF. Non-native speakers of English will not have any more a borrowed identity but an identity of their own as international users of an international language.

Referințe

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