



ATTITUDES OF EFL TEACHERS IN TURKEY CONTEXT TOWARDS TEACHING ENGLISH VARIETIES IN THEIR LESSONS

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Abstract

The World Englishes (Kachru et al., 2006) and English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) (Jenkins et al., 2011) paradigms warn us that English now has different varieties, which due to their widespread use and regularity, should be embraced and included in English language pedagogy practices. The practitioners in the classroom are the teachers, however, and their beliefs and views related to a particular issue are critical in incorporating the new developments into the classroom. Therefore, this study focuses on the views of EFL teachers in Turkey related to the teaching of English varieties in their lessons. The data were gathered from 50 randomly selected EFL teachers using questionnaires and interviews. The findings showed that the bulk of the teachers were not aware of the developments related to WE and ELF and that many of them still believed that “standard varieties” such as British and American English should be the main teaching goal.

Keywords: English as Lingua Franca, English Varieties.

INTRODUCTION

It is a known fact that the language that we use varies in the light of our purpose of the interaction, addressee of the interaction, location, different sub- cultures, and speech event. Although in the onset the idea that language is uniform or fixed might have proved to be useful to be able to form a scientific base, this conception is not plausible in the least. It thus needs to be replaced with other models of looking at the language (Haugen, 1972 as cited in Canagarajah, 2007). With English language being more global today and its being used for communicating with diverse populations of people, this supposition comes into prominence and the topic “language varieties” gains momentum. The term language varieties can cover everything from one person variation (idiolect) to a national variety of a language (Berruto, 1987 as cited in Miyagi, K. 2006).

Pedagogical paradigms of English language teaching should be evolved according to these polytheist ideas as well. English language teachers, constituting one of the most important language sources and the primary interlocutors in the classrooms, have an important impact on forming and assuring these views to be realized in the classrooms. Their attitudes towards the teaching varieties of English are of importance. They are in the position to judge their students’ language output and affect their students’ communicative competence. Studying teacher attitudes towards the use and teaching of different varieties of English can help us to understand current situation of EFL teacher attitudes related to English varieties in Turkish context and take necessary actions for teacher education.

Several studies in the literature imply that as teachers gain more experience in the job, their attitudes tend to change toward being more conservative (Muller-Fohrbrodt 1978 et al. as cited in Veenman,



1984). Since the year of teaching experience has an impact upon the attitudes of the teachers, it is worthwhile to take this point into consideration in the study. Therefore the investigating the differenced in the attitudes of both experienced and inexperienced English language teachers may provide us with a more detailed description of the teachers' current points of view.

In this study therefore the following questions were addressed:

1. What are the attitudes of EFL teachers in Turkey context towards teaching English varieties in their lessons?
 - a. Are there are any significant differences in attitudes of the teachers according to their teaching experiences?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The World Englishes (Kachru et al., 2006) and English as a Lingua Franca paradigm (Jenkins et al., 2011) emphasize that the common diversities of spoken Englishes cannot be treated as errors but varieties. English is now spoken in distinct geographies and by people from different sociolinguistic backgrounds. Therefore, the English language pedagogy practices should be re-examined in order to be in line with teaching the language to be able to use it in a global context (as cited in Galloway, N., 2013).

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Fries (1940) stated that in the 18th century, grammarians attempted to standardize the use of English language by emphasizing the use of correct grammar of the preferred high status London English. These ideals that were started in this century created a base for the standard English educational practices and rule driven evaluations of the language use of students (as cited in Stilley, L. R. (1997). Standard Language by definition is language which is not associated with a particular dialect. It is also generally associated with written language (Sato, C. J. 1989). For long years the British and American English were accepted and promoted as the only internationally acceptable pedagogical models for English language teaching (Adamson, 2004 et. al as cited in He, D., & Zhang, Q. 2010). Although the spread of the teaching and use of English has expanded immensely since then, the tendency to associate English with England and America still persists. However it is also a reality that the recognition of the different varieties of English as equally worthy to use and teach, is beginning to increase (Algeo, J., 1993)

Kachru (1985) outlined the main differences in the use of English according to three groups which are inner, outer and expanding circles. This model has been criticized for failing to take finer details into consideration while drawing the boundaries and the fact that boundaries are more influx than portrayed. However in its essence the model categorized English as English used as the native language (inner circle) English which is used in former colonies where it is widely used as a second or the official language (outer circle) and English which is spoken as a foreign language (expanding circle) (as cited in Miyagi, K. 2006). Additionally, the term World Englishes has been started to be used as a cover term for all varieties of English around the world and it has started to be approved by sociolinguists (Jenkins, J., 2006).

The spread of English worldwide both changed its forms and functions and the demographic balance of the users of the language. The English language communications are taking place between non-native speakers as well as native versus native and native versus non native speakers (Graddol 1997 et al. as cited in Matsuda, A. 2003) Therefore educating students solely based on the inner circle oriented rules would prove to be inadequate (Kubota, 2001 as cited in Matsuda, A. 2003). On the contrary familiarizing the students with different English varieties puts them in a more advantageous position in international and intercultural communications (Smith, 1992 as cited in Miyagi, K. 2006). Considering the close relation between language and identity and the fact that the students can



reflect their own socio-cultural reality via the world Englishes paradigm, it is the model that should be adopted worldwide to support their language development. The awareness and promotion of different varieties affect the students' self confidence about their own varieties and their ability to express themselves positively (Jenkins, J., 2006).

There are several concerns related to the diversity and teaching different varieties of Englishes in the classrooms as well. Firstly in the developing countries where the teachers are not familiar with the cultures that are outside of their borders, where there are scarce sources and a large population and where the English has no real life use, the practice of teaching English varieties is affected negatively (Bruthiaux, P. 2010). Additionally the countries where the Standard English exams are prevalent, the teaching are conducted according to inner circle paradigm. Iwate et al. (2002) states that in Japan the tests and lesson materials are still based on American and British English varieties (as cited in Matsuda, A. 2003). Similarly in the study of Miyagi, K. (2006) the teachers cited the same reason for their preference of teaching Standard English. Timmis (2002) stated that among the diversity, a workable model is needed for international communication (as cited in He, D., & Zhang, Q. 2010). Jenkins (1998) suggested that native speaker norms should be taken as reference points so as not to diverge too far from the core sounds (as cited in Miyagi, K. 2006).

Miyagi, K. (2006) studied the thirty-six Japanese teachers of English and 28 student English teachers' perceptions towards non native varieties of English. In the study majority of the teachers preferred inner circle varieties to include in their classrooms.

In the study of He, D., & Zhang, Q. (2010) 55% of the 820 students and 210 teachers didn't give importance whether or not they have their mother language accent while speaking English, as long as they are understood. However most of the teachers still wanted their students to acquire native like pronunciation.

Kunschak, C. (2003) investigated the awareness and attitudes of 420 College students who are learners of German towards variety in L2. Majority of the students stated that variation is helpful and/or useful; some of them voiced their concerns of good impression implying the higher status of standard variety of the language. The familiar varieties were regarded acceptable by the participants. Bayyurt and Sifakis's 2015 project on awareness on English language as a Lingua Franca with L2 English teachers proved to be useful for teachers to realize and ponder upon some concepts such as the diversity and richness of the English as a lingua franca, ownership of the English language and nativism. The teachers' self confidence for the English that used improved as well as they positively considered using student language as input. And although slow, the teachers' awareness and willingness to give place to the varieties of English in their lessons were cultivated in the project.

METHODS

Participants

The participants were 50 English language teachers who were chosen by random sampling procedure. Their teaching experience varied from 1 year to 34 years and they worked in primary schools (n=14), secondary schools (n=7) and universities (n=29). 45 of the participants were graduated from ELT (English Language Teaching) departments and 5 of them were graduated from ELIT (English Literature) departments.

Data collection Tools

The data were collected via an attitude questionnaire which was prepared in line with the points in the literature review. It consisted of open ended and scale questions. In the first part (open ended questions) the participants were asked to define the terms: "English varieties", "Native English Varieties" and "Standard English Language" with their own words. They were also asked which types of language they think to be appropriate to teach in classrooms. The second part (scale questions) asked their attitudes toward teaching different English varieties in classrooms.



Procedures

A pilot study was conducted with 5 participants for respondent validation. After this procedure, the volunteer participants were contacted via e-mail. The questionnaires were sent them in online form and the volunteer participants responded by filling the online form.

For the purpose of an inductive analysis the constant comparative method was made use of to analyze the qualitative data in the study. Glaser and Straus (1967) define this method as a merger of inductive category coding with simultaneous comparison of the units (as cited in Maykut & Morehouse, 1994).

The teachers in the study were categorized into three groups. In literature generally teachers with 3 or less years of experiences are grouped as novice teachers (Veenman, 1984; Tschannen-Moran, M., & Hoy, A. W., 2007), the teachers who are in the first 5 years of their career are categorized as inexperienced teachers (Sharabyan, S. K. 2011). In this study the teachers were grouped as novice (1-3 years), inexperienced teachers (4-5) and experienced teachers (and higher). A one way ANOVA was used in order to see whether there was any difference between these three groups of teachers. Additionally a planned comparison one way ANOVA was run to see if there was any difference between broader inexperienced teachers (1-5 years) and experienced teachers (6 and higher) in their attitudes towards including different varieties in their English language teaching. For the ANOVA analyses, negative items: 19,20,21,22,23,29,30 and 37 (which were opposing to the variation in language) were reversed and all scale items were aggregated into a continuous variable. Then the means for each group were compared. To an in dept analyses of the general outline, the frequencies of the questions for all of the participants were inspected.

RESULTS

Qualitative data

The aim of the study was to explore the attitudes of English language teachers towards teaching different English language varieties in their classroom. The qualitative data provided insights related to how the teachers defined the terms "English Varieties", "Native English Varieties" and "Standard English Language". The teachers were asked which varieties of the English language should be taught in classrooms and consecutively the reasons for their choice.

English Varieties

When the teachers were asked what was the first thing that came to their minds when they heard the term "English Varieties", the most frequent definition was different accents of English (n=13). "World Englishes" and "English as a Lingua Franca" definition were given as the second most frequent answer (n=7). Several teachers who gave this answer defined English as the "different Englishes spoken all around the world". 5 of the teachers defined varieties with the definition of Kachru's inner (American, British and Australian) and outer circle Englishes (Indian, South Africa etc...). 3 of the teachers who gave these answers emphasized that the varieties were the variant form from the Standard English. Apart from that, the answers of formal and informal English, academic or spoken English were also given to this question.

Native English Varieties

When the participants asked what came to their minds when they heard the term "Native English Varieties" the answers varied from only "British English" (n=2) to "British and American English" (n=5) and "British, American, Australian, Canadian Englishes" (n=7). One participant stated that Cockney accent came to their minds when they heard the term "Native English Varieties".

Standard English Language

Standard English language is defined as the "official (n=2), national (n=2), worldwide recognized and established (n=7) language. The participants emphasized that it is the form that the grammar books and written language are based on and it must be the language that should be taught. It is defined as

the formal language. Several participants stated that Standard English is devoid of any accents and it is associated with Received Pronunciation and Queen's English. Some participants also associated Standard English with BBC English and one participant defined it as the "office English". Several teachers stated that Standard English is the most commonly accepted as the true form of English. It is the pure language and easy to understand.

English Varieties to Teach

The majority of the teachers stated that the English that should be taught in the classroom should be "Standard English", "British-American English" or "London English" (n=30). The reasons given to these choices were listed as follows:

- Standard English is the most common English (n=6).
- It is reasonable to stick to standard while teaching a new language, different varieties cause problems in teaching (n=2).
- Standard English is the accepted form worldwide (n=2).
- Standard English is the correct and the best variety (n=8).
- American English dominates the science and politics. Therefore it should be taught (n=2).
- Different varieties such as Australian, African- American English are not official accepted English (n=1).
- It is very challenging to find a common ground with varieties. The people who need varieties can learn it from songs etc... (n=2).
- The language is the language of English people (n=1).
- The exams are in Standard English (n=1).
- Standard English is a sign of good education (n=1).

Among the teachers who wanted to teach different English varieties, 4 of the teachers advocated the teaching all of the different varieties if it was possible. 3 teachers stated that the purpose and the profile of the students should be the determining factor in choosing which variety to teach. 4 teachers stated that although the students need to learn Standard English some of the class time should be allocated for them to be familiarize with other varieties of English as well. The reasons they gave for their choices were listed as follows:

- Language is for communication. You don't have to sound like British people (n=2).
- English is an international Lingua Franca now (n=2).
- The students can involve more to the lessons (n=1).
- The students can encounter with other varieties. They should be knowledgeable about them (n=7).

Quantitative data

In order to see whether or not there was a difference in the attitudes depending upon the experience of teachers, two different one way ANOVAs were conducted. The descriptives were provided in Table 1.

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics of the ANOVA

Groups	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Novice 1-3 years)	7	76.28	7.52
Inexperienced (4-5 years)	7	75.85	6.25
Experienced (6 years and higher)	23	74.65	8.24

The ANOVAs did not yield significant results for the comparison of "novice", "inexperienced" and "experienced teachers" ($p = .862$). For the planned comparison of "broader inexperienced (novice and inexperienced group as one group)" and "experienced teachers" the null hypothesis could not be rejected as well ($p = .595$).

Awareness of English as an International Language and English Language Varieties

The 84.3 % of the participants (n=43) agreed that English is a common international language (item 11). The rate of the teachers who agreed that "There are different acceptable varieties of English," (item 12) was 74.5% (n=38). The 72.5% (n=37) of the respondents agreed that their students should be aware the fact that there are different Englishes, and 76.5% of the teachers stated as language teachers, they should know there are varieties of English. 74, 5 % of them were interested to learn different English varieties. 51% (n=26) of the teachers agreed that the English they used was affected by their native language and 84.3% of them believed that their students' English was affected by their native languages.

Positive Attitudes towards English Varieties

The teachers who were positive about the international differences in the English language constituted 76.5% of the participants. The 78.4 % of the teachers agreed that considered there was no problem in communication; the native forms need not to be followed. 37.3 % (n=19) teachers believes that all the varieties of the English are equally prestigious. 54.9 % of the teachers agreed that the ownership of the language belonged to everyone who used it without taking "nativeness" into consideration. 70.6% of the participants agreed that it is positive for learners to incorporate their cultural elements to their second language (English). However only 27.5% of the teachers believed the fact that their English was affected by their mother language was a positive characteristic.

Negative Attitudes towards English Varieties

39.2% of the participants agreed that the people in expanding circle (Turkey, France, Brazil etc...) would have difficulty understanding each other and 21.6% (n=11) of the teachers believed the people in the outer circle (India, Nigeria, Singapore etc...) would have difficulty understanding each other. However only 9, 8 (n=5) of the teachers believed that native speakers of English would not understand them if they didn't speak by their standards. 72.5 % of them aimed to speak Standard English. 54.9% of the teachers believed that the fact that their English was affected by their native language was a negative characteristic.

Positive Attitudes Teaching English Varieties

60.8% of the teachers agreed that the lesson materials should include different varieties of English as language input. 27% of the teachers regarded the fact that their English was affected by their native language was a positive characteristic. 64% of them stated that it was unnecessary to correct student errors so long as it didn't interfere with the communication. 56. 9% of the teachers believed encouraging students' use their own variety of English (with the effect of their native language) would impact their learning positively. 62.7% of them believed that the student errors should be evaluated via newly formed standards which take World Englishes paradigm as the basis. 33.3% of the teachers believed that the students would feel identity threat if they were forced to use native English forms.

Negative Attitudes Teaching English Varieties

64.7% of the teachers believed that Standard English was more prestigious than other varieties. The 68% (n=35) teachers agreed that the language that should be taught in the classrooms should be Standard English. 72.5 % of them wanted to teach Standard English to their students and 60.8% of the teachers preferred to teach Standard English on the ground that this English carries the connotation of being well educated.

DISCUSSION

In the study, although most of the teachers were aware of the existence of the different varieties of English and they wanted their students to learn about them, they did not think it as a positive asset to have the traces of their mother languages in their English use as language teachers. Half of the participants believed that encouraging students to incorporate their own cultural features into their English would have a positive impact on their English language learning success.



Some of the teachers acknowledged the global nature of the English language and that the most important goal of the language was to be familiar with different varieties and be able to communicate with others. However most of the teachers wanted their students to learn the Standard English Language. Some of the participants' reasons for this preference supported the idea of "dominance of the discourse by native speakers especially for American English" (Tsuda 1997, p.16 as cited in Miyagi, K. 2006). Additionally the higher status of the Standard English (Sato, C. J. 1989) was among the concerns of the English teachers in the study. The concerns and attitudes of the teachers' towards having one dominant form along with familiarizing students with other varieties is in line with the findings of several other studies in the field (Bruthiaux, P. 2010; He, D., & Zhang, Q. 2010). Jenkins (2005) states that the difficulty that the teachers experience in giving up standard form is due to the over-emphasis on it in their teacher education (as cited in Deniz, E. B., Özkan, Y., & Bayyurt, Y., 2016). Additionally "for many years the standard varieties of British and American English were accepted and promoted as the only internationally acceptable pedagogical models for English language teaching" (Adamson, 2004 et al.: 770 as cited in He, D., & Zhang, Q. 2010).

A big percentage of the teachers in the study think that Standard English is the most common form and it is the form which could be understood easily. The teachers believed that people from countries where English is used as foreign language, would have difficulty understanding one another. These opinions are contrary to Seidlofer's (2004) statements that misunderstanding are not frequent in ELF interactions and when they do occur they are resolved by pragmatic strategies (as cited in Canagarajah, 2007).

The teachers in the study did not refer to the logistical problems of lack of materials and information related to teaching World Englishes.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

In the study, although some of the teachers were aware of the terms related to World Englishes and English Language as a Lingua Franca, the dominant status of the standard forms of American and British English was observed in most of their attitudes toward the language. The teachers associated standard forms with the proper and accepted version of English and with being well educated. They also voiced their concerns of possible miscommunication among the speakers in the Kachru's Expanding circle.

Teachers are in the position to raise the awareness of their students towards the language variation and equip them with strategies and resources to learn them. Therefore it is highly important for teachers to be competent in the today's understanding of English's global position and the fact that it is used for communicating people with diverse linguistic backgrounds and probably in non native settings. Therefore discourse strategies gain importance in these kinds of interactions. Keeping in mind that in today's context the teachers should be "multilingual, ELF-aware, pragmatically and inter-culturally competent" (Deniz, E. B., Özkan, Y., & Bayyurt, Y., 2016 p. 158) they should equip their students with those discourse strategies. The teachers in the study were generally open to add the varieties to their lessons; however there are serious problems relate to the overly emphasized status (only accepted form, true form etc...) of Standard English and doubts related to communication in other varieties of English. Awareness raising activities and training are needed to inform teachers about the current status of English, World Englishes and English as Lingua Franca concepts.

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