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TEACHING ENGLISH AS A LINGUA FRANCA

The term “English as a lingua franca” (ELF) has emerged as a way of referring to communication in English between speakers with different first languages. There has become a challenge for the teachers of English where the language is taught as the foreign one because of focusing on the RP and native English speakers itself. Although new point of view on the learning does not exactly mean the participation of English native speakers in ELF interaction.

Empirical work on the linguistic description of ELF at a number of levels has in fact been under way for several years now. Research has been carried out at the level of phonology (Jenkins), pragmatics (Meierkord), and lexicogrammar (Seidlhofer). David Crystal has also opened the idea of Englishes and understanding of up-to-date needs of learners.

English as lingua franca can be differently understood. There are two main definitions of ELF:

- it is a language, an actual variety of English, distinct from native varieties;
- or a context or purpose of use. [6, 211]

In the article the term is understood in the second sense. The teaching of ELF can thus be defined as teaching any person to use English for a lingua franca purposes, regardless of which actual English variety he/she is employed to do.

If attitudes towards ELF as a variety have been conflicting, the attitudes towards integrating ELF into English language teaching have been even more so.

The ideas of Communicative Language Teaching with the goal of communicative competence have dominated ELT over thirty years. The concept of communicative competence can be divided into four competences: grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse and strategic [1]. From the prospective of ELF “learning a foreign language becomes a kind of enculturation, where one acquires new cultural

frames of reference and a new world view, reflecting those of the target language culture and its speakers” [1, 58]. Applying this to the English language with global spread over multitude of cultures seems unfeasible: “any attempt to define the cultural context of the language ... is inherently an attempt to promote one English speaking community's culture at the expense of others” [4, 161].

Another problem teachers deal with while teaching ELF is that the native speaker model behind the concept of communicative competence is often thought to be the best one and must have been idealised. In other words, there is “tendency to assume that there is an almost hard-wired relationship between the status of being a native speaker of a language and a complete knowledge of and about that language ... and that all native speakers share the same knowledge” [4].

Whether a standard version of the language does in fact exist or not is another question, which is very difficult to answer. There is, indeed, no formal codification of it in a grammar or dictionary; but lack of codification in itself does not disprove existence: there are plenty of languages which exist without having been codified. Most practitioners, on the other hand, are able in most cases to make fairly confident intuitive judgements as to items that do not normally belong to ELF discourse but rather to specific dialects, and as to items that are clearly generally acceptable worldwide. This phenomenon makes it appear likely that somewhere underpinning the knowledge of fully competent speakers is an awareness of the existence of a range of standard forms: not one that anybody has imposed on them, just one that their experience of encounters with the language in various contexts has taught them exists [3].

The native speaker authority is also reflected in the dichotomy between native and non-native teachers. On a global scale, non-native teachers of English have traditionally been on the losing side in comparison since professional expertise, native-speakerness [3]. Non-native teachers have nonetheless several advantages over native teachers, and over monolingual native teachers in particular: non-native teachers “know the target language as a foreign language, share with their students the experience of what it is like to try and make it their own, often through the same

first language/culture “filter”, and can represent relevant role models for learners” [5, 134-135]. In other words, non-native teachers are usually both competent and good speakers and qualified pedagogues of the target language because of being good at learning the language themselves.

It is crucial to understand whether teaching ELF is effective. There are both serious opponents and proponents of ELF and non-native teachers in ELT. If we are to provide English learners with useful skills in order to cope with diverse, real life intercultural encounters, some serious reconsideration needs to be done. Reforming ELT must start from the very essentials, such as what could be a realistic target for English language teaching and learning.

LITERATURE

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