



English as Lingua Franca: Perspectives from Pre-service and in-service English teachers in Iran



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ABSTRACT

The present study tried to shed more light on the existing trend of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), which is steadily overlooking the long lasting beliefs in the ELT field but it appears that Iranian pre and in-service voices have been underrepresented in this regard. To properly represent them, their attitudes toward ELF were examined. To collect data in a quantitative design the EFL attitude questionnaire consisting of four components designed and validated by Curran and Chern (2017) was employed. The questionnaire was distributed among 91 pre and 85 in-service EFL teachers randomly selected. The descriptive analysis of the data showed that both groups of the participants positively agree, with the statements concerning the use of English for communication, the role of language and culture and language used in classroom context. However, an underlying tendency towards native speakers' (NS) norms was also found based on the analysis of the participants' answers to the statements related to the models of English. Moreover, comparing the groups' means by using an independent t-test did not reveal any significant difference between the pre- and in-service teachers' attitudes towards ELF. Findings of the study might have implications for teacher-educators, materials developers and EFL teachers.

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1. Introduction

For decades English has been considered as an international language and its use as a medium of communication has been growing very fast. This language has a wide range of functions since it is has been used by native and non-native speakers for different purposes (Kachru, 1992). Due to its long-term contribution in integrating linguistic and cultural elements in many parts of the world, it has experienced localization and nativization (Jenkins, 2009; Kachru & Smith, 2009). According to Kachru and Nelson (1996), the worldwide spread of English can be explained on the basis of two distinct diasporas- an idea proposed by Kachru (1992) for the first time. The first diaspora concerns the spread of English from the mother countries like North America to new contexts, whereas the second diaspora happened when those who had been educated in English transmitted it to new locations involving nativization processes.

This global dissemination also has resulted in the development of recent paradigms of research like World Englishes (WE), English as an international language (EIL), and English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) in the field of English language teaching which are flexible modes of communication among non-native English speakers (Ke & Cahyani, 2014). Alternatives in WE are being promoted by some as comprehensible and accessible models for local learners based on people's real-life usage in everyday discourse across a wide range of domains (Dippold, Bridges, Eccles & Mullen, 2019). Such promotions are at best relatively a reaction to formerly prevalent 'native speakerist' models (Holliday, 2006). As Jenkins (2007) has argued, there is a tendency in such models to overemphasize native English speakers' usages in favor of disempowering non-native English speaker teachers and learners, and so lead to the preservation of an economic and sociopolitical dominance of 'core' English-speaking nations like the UK, the USA and Australia.

In most of the related studies the advocated common ideology is 'anti-

normative' (Kubota, 2012) emphasizing the pluralistic view of English and decreasing the monopoly and monolith of native English norms in ELT (Galloway & Rose, 2017). Along with a pluralistic versus monolithic point of view on the globalized English, the issues like ownership, legitimacy, standardness, and identity have also been the starting points for studying ELF, WE, and EIL (Mirhosseini & Badri, 2020; Seidlhofer, 2011). Nevertheless, due to the inadequate amount of the related evidence, it is not clear which English or Englishes are really taught and learned in different parts of the world (Leyi, 2020). It also seems that there is a limited amount of clear guidance in terms of national language education policies and a default validation of 'native speaker' varieties by means of their prevalent use in teaching and testing materials (Jenkins, 2007). Teachers, informants and learners' views probably key models regarding what type of English to be taught are mainly ignored in the debate (Chun, 2019; Young & Walsh, 2010). Furthermore, little research (e.g., Curran & Chern, 2017; Luo, 2017; Tajeddin & Pashmforoosh, 2020) has attempted to identify how ELT teachers orientate themselves towards different varieties of English in the expanding circle context including the countries such as Iran where English is taught and learnt as a foreign language. Inspired by the necessity to address this gap, the present study attempted to compare Iranian pre and in-service ELT teachers' attitudes towards ELF.

2. Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

Recently, English as a lingua franca has attracted a lot of attention owing to its widespread use among non-native speakers as a 'practical tool' and 'working language' (Crystal, 2003). However, the demand for an LF for people who do not share the same language has existed for centuries (Haberland, 2011). Though there is no straightforward definition of ELF, two major understandings can be differentiated. On one side, ELF is often viewed as a 'contact language' among people with no

common mother tongue who use English as a foreign language for communication. On the other side, ELF is also considered as interactions among lingua cultures whose mother tongue is not English (Seidlhofer, 2004). These definitions represent two different but connected outlooks on ELF. The first definition sees ELF as a linguistic concept and regards it as a language variety; the second one has a sociolinguistic perspective which defines ELF as a working device and not a language variety (Nagy, 2016). According to Jenkins (2009), ELF entails local variation, common ground, and accommodation skills. In her view, the common ground can be defined as “linguistic forms shared with English as a native language (ENL) and forms that differ from ENL but have arisen through contact between ELF users” (p. 201). The accommodation skills, such as paraphrasing, repetition, clarification, code-switching, self-repair, staying away from localized vocabulary and idioms, and ‘let it pass’ strategy are repeatedly employed in an ELF context to facilitate communication (Cogo, 2009; Kirkpatrick, 2008). Along with the common ground, English users need to be aware of ELF-related skills, local variation and accommodation skills, in order to communicate smoothly in an ELF context (Luo, 2017). Though local variation is a fundamental part in Jenkins’ (2009) definition, some studies have recommended viewing ELF as a language function instead of a variety (Matsuda & Friedrich, 2011) or “as an activity type’ in which the participants of different linguistic backgrounds interact to communicate” (Park & Wee, 2011, p. 360).

To conceptualize the widespread use of English, Kachru (1985) introduced a concentric model of English representing “the type of spread, the patterns of acquisition and the functional domains in which English is used across languages and cultures” (p. 12). This model states three circles including ‘inner’, ‘outer’, and ‘expanding’ in a more detailed way characterize the terms English as a native language, English as a second language (ESL), and English as a foreign language (EFL) respectively. In the inner circle

countries, English is the primary language of the country. Representative countries consist of the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Ireland, and the United States. Speakers in this circle account for almost 20-30% of the total users (Crystal, 2003). In the outer circle, the expansion of English is mainly a consequence of colonization by English speaking countries. As a result of British colonization in the 19th century, English was institutionalized in the multilingual environments. However, this imposition offers a united second language for institutional, communicational, and official purposes in the multilingual nations like India, Singapore, or the Philippines. It is in this circle that English varieties, containing standard, pidgin, and creole appeared and developed as the local language (Kachru, 1985). About 26% of the total English users exist in this circle as well (Crystal, 2003).

On the other hand, in the expanding circle, English is mainly used as the language of international communication and widely studied as a foreign language in countries like China, Russia, Japan, and the European countries. The growing importance of English as an international language is the main cause of its spread in this circle. Crystal (1997) noticed that currently many countries in this circle have more English speaking bilinguals compared to the similar speakers in the outer circle. Since the language is not generally used for local communication, no locally generated English varieties can be observed. The speakers in this circle cover almost half of the English users. Reasons for the growing number of English speakers in the expanding circle have to do with the fact that world population is increasing very fast and English is the language of technology, science, education, politics, the media, and international travel (Crystal, 2003). In fact, those users of English who live in the expanding circle and use English as a foreign language are making a deep effect on how English is changing today (Seidlhofer, 2005).

Among the earliest models developed to present varieties of English speakers, the one which is commonly

practiced in English language teaching includes three categories namely English as a native language (ENL), English as a second language (ESL), and English as a foreign language (EFL) (Kirkpatrick, 2007). The mother tongue of most individuals who live in ENL settings is English. ESL countries are mostly previous colonies of either the U.K. or the U.S., and English is often used as an official language. In EFL settings, English is generally a subject of study at schools and is hardly ever used in everyday life. The ENL/ESL/EFL model assumes that there is only one variety of English in ENL countries which is considered the 'standard' form and the speakers in ESL and EFL settings should try to imitate it (Kirkpatrick, 2012). However, the attraction of Kachru's (1985) model compared to the former ones is that it tries to present a more precise picture of the English condition in today's world and holds that one variety is not preferred over another. This model also considers the cultural diversity along with linguistic diversity (Kachru, 1990). As Jenkins (2006) has stated, Kachru's model has a better reflection of the range of English users.

Previous studies have tried to look into teaching ELF in the expanding-circle countries and reasoned that teaching English as a mother tongue is not suitable taking into account contextual factors, learner needs, and curricular goals (Matsuda, 2003). It is proposed that English teachers should address teaching English as an international and intercultural language (Sifakis, 2004). Having this goal in view, later Sifakis (2009) proposed communicative teaching contexts with a C-bound outlook (communication, comprehensibility and culture) that puts learners' cultural identity and mutual intelligibility in order of importance. He also recommended that the schools should equip learners with the skills necessary for realistic contexts, like communication among non-native speakers (non-NSs).

In spite of the present challenges in familiarizing teachers with ELF principles or embracing an ELF approach in their classroom, some investigators have started to explore prospective teachers' beliefs

about ELF and found that even though teachers acknowledged the effectiveness of learning ELF, they had a tendency to teach English compatible with native speakers' (NS) norms (Sifakis & Sougari, 2005). Young and Walsh (2010) found that while ELF was conceptually attractive to teachers, they did not have a clear understanding of the ELF nature and were generally preoccupied with how to teach an English variety which was applicable to their local context. A research by Suzuki (2011) explored student-teachers' attitudes towards teaching English diversities in Japan. Results revealed that the participants were reluctant to accept varieties of English except standard American/British English. To change the viewpoint that American/British English is equal to English for international communication, the researcher recommended that teacher education system include information about ELF and the concept of English diversity in its curricula. In line with this, Sifakis (2009) suggests an ELF-based teacher education program which stresses teachers' ability to utilize technology to make relations with non-NSs and tries to raise teacher awareness of the ELF communication value.

Dewey (2012) also examined student-teachers' view of the ELF concepts and the potential influence of these concepts on their teaching practice. While the participants had the knowledge of ELF theories and believed that all English varieties should be acknowledged and respected, using ELF principles in their teaching practice seemed more challenging. Respondents emphasized that in most contexts, teachers were supposed to accept and apply a standard form, and that ELF awareness had not been supported. However, some other researchers like Luo (2017) attempted to examine the challenges teacher educators face when trying to familiarize their student-teachers with some concepts related to ELF. These teacher educators had mixed reactions. They appreciated the significance of making their students familiar with ELF, but they were not sure whether they indeed wanted it or not. The instructors also had troubles in teaching ELF since they sensed there was an absence of teaching materials on the topic,

and their instruction was usually on the basis of native-speaker norms.

Some researchers in Iran are also beginning to explore teacher's and students' attitudes towards ELF and English varieties materials for teaching (e.g., Fazilatfar & Barzegar Rahatloo, 2018; Tajeddin & Pashmforoosh, 2020; Tamimi Sa'd, 2018). Fazilatfar and Barzegar Rahatloo (2018) for example, focused on teacher trainees' attitude toward ELF through using questionnaire and semi-structured interviews and results revealed contradictory and unsure attitudes towards English varieties. In fact, an underlying interest towards NS norms was observed among the participants. Tamimi Sa'd (2018) examined EFL learners' attitudes toward World Englishes using a questionnaire and focus-group interviews. Similarly, he found that Iranian language learners perceive the Standard English spoken in the Inner Circle as the only authentic reference group. Taking into account that very few studies have investigated either language learners or teachers' attitude toward ELF, the current study research is aiming at comparing pre and in-service language teachers' attitude towards ELF. Accordingly, the research questions addressing this issue are as follows:

1. **What are the attitudes of Iranian pre-service and in-service EFL teachers toward English as Lingua franca?**
2. **Is there any significant difference between Iranian pre-service and in-service EFL teachers in terms of their attitudes toward English as Lingua franca?**

3. Method

3.1. Participants

The research participants were 176 male and female Iranian pre-service and in-service English teachers who were purposefully selected based on convenient sampling. Pre-service teachers ($n = 91$) were sophomore and junior students aged 21-24 majoring teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) at two branches of Teacher Education University located in Tehran,

Iran. Most of these pre-service teachers have not been to a foreign country ($n = 83$) and their first language was Persian. Eighty five in-service teachers with the age range of 28 to 47 who were teaching in state junior and senior high schools in different parts of the country also participated in this study. As to their educational backgrounds, 30 teachers were undergraduates and 55 were graduates of the English-related fields of study and two had Ph.D. degree. Some of them had been to a foreign country ($n = 48$), and they all spoke Persian as their L1. As presented in Tables 1 and 2, the in-service teachers had various years of teaching experience. They were classified into two groups of less experienced teachers ($n = 23$), below 5 years of teaching, and more experienced ($n = 62$), over 5 years. Table 1 and 2 display the relevant characteristics of the respondents:

Table 1. *Pre-service Teachers' Profile Summary*

Variab les	Categori es	Frequenc y	Percenta ge
Gender	Male	27	29.67%
	Female	64	70.33%
	Total	91	100%
Being to a Foreign Country	Yes	8	8.79%
	No	83	91.20%
	Total	91	100%

Table 2. *In-service Teachers' Profile Summary*

Variab les	Categori es	Frequenc y	Percenta ge
Gender	Male	33	18.75%
	Female	52	29.54%
	Total	85	100%
Degree	B.A.	30	35.29%
	M.A.	53	62.35%
	Ph.D.	2	2.35%
	Total	85	100%

Years of teaching English	1-5 Years	23	27.05%
	6+	62	72.94%
	Total	85	100%
Being to a Foreign Country	Yes	27	31.76%
	No	58	68.23%
	Total	85	100%

3.2. Instruments

A five-point Likert scale questionnaire consisting of 20 statements developed by Curren and Chern (2017) was used to collect the data of the study. The respondents were asked to rank items from 1 to 5, with 1 representing strongly disagree and 5 strongly agree. The statements were divided into four categories. The first category comprised ten statements (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 10, 11, 18, and 19) relating to the concepts which were associated with various models of English. These statements were designed to find out the pre-service and in-service teachers' attitudes towards matters like providing students with teaching materials which include various English accents, and whether the role models for learners and teachers should be developed based on native speakers of English.

The second category was comprised of two statements (14 and 15) related to using English for communication. These statements exposed the participants to the question that whether students should learn English to use it in real-life communication and communicate with non-native speakers. The third category consisted of four statements (7, 8, 9, and 20) that centered on the position of language and culture in an English classroom. The main goal of these questions was to tap the participants' attitude towards the importance of learning English native speakers' culture, and whether they thought English should be learnt to share their own cultural practices and traditions with others. Also the participants were asked if teachers should inform their students about the cultural differences that exist among people from various cultural backgrounds and whether

students should be motivated to talk about those differences.

The last category contained four statements (12, 13, 16, and 17) concerning language used in the classroom context. Participants were requested to express their ideas regarding whether an English-only classroom should be motivated, whether and when it was suitable to use students' L1, and the significance of teaching useful code-switching strategies. To ensure the reliability of the questionnaire, it was pilot-tested with 25 pre-service and 25 in-service teachers with similar characteristics to the participants of the main sample. The reliability index, assessed by Cronbach's alpha formula, was found to be .89. Since the original questionnaire was prepared for Taiwanese respondents, before running the pilot test, the questionnaire was judged by 3 TEFL professors and they confirmed its content validity for the purpose of the current study.

3.3. Procedure

Data collection was conducted online in which 118 pre-service teachers majoring in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) and studying in two branches of Farhangian University in Tehran province, Iran were informed about the purpose of the study via email and were requested to kindly fill out the attached questionnaire. The respondents were ensured that their information would be kept confidential. Finally, ninety one received responses were chosen for further analysis, due to the fact that some participants did not answer the emails properly, their responses were excluded from analysis. Moreover, one hundred in-service teachers in different provinces of the country including Tehran, Markazi, Alborz, and Qom, received the online questionnaire, 85 of these in-service teachers answered the questionnaire statements.

3.4. Data Analysis

Pre-service and in-service ELT teachers' responses to the Questionnaire statements were summarized through descriptive statistics including frequencies and percentages and were analyzed through

main statistical tests as one sample and independent t-test.

4. Findings

Before conducting data analyses Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test was run to confirm the normality of their distribution

and the legitimacy of using parametric tests. The findings showed that the data distribution for ELF and its components was normal ($\text{sig} > .05$). Table 4 shows these findings.

Table 4. *Tests of normality (Kolmogorov-Smirnov)*

Variable	Statistic	df	Sig.
Attitudes towards models of English	.115	176	.600
Attitudes towards using English for communication	.153	176	.119
The role of language and culture	.138	176	.573
Language used in class	.124	176	.756
Attitudes towards English as Lingua Franca	.196	176	.422

4.1. Answering Research Questions

In order to answer the first research question (What are the attitudes of Iranian pre-service and in-service EFL teachers toward English as Lingua franca?) descriptive data analyses were done to compare the components of the questionnaire.

Table 5. *The Highest Percentages of the Responses by Pre and In-service Teachers*

Table 6. *The Lowest Percentages of the*

Components	Questions	Completely agree/agree	
		Pre-service	In-service
Attitudes towards models of English	1. I think that English teaching materials should only use native-speaker models.	69.2	57.6
	2. I think it is important that students try to sound like native speakers of English.	63.7	57.6
	5. I think it is confusing to introduce students too many different English accents in class.	58.5	55.3
	10. I think it is important that classroom materials provide a single model of English, either American or British.	57.7	56.8
Attitudes towards using	14. I think the major focus of an English program should be teaching students to use the language in real-life communication.	93.4	83.5
The role of language and culture	7. I think it is important that students can use English to share information about their own culture and traditions.	91.2	81.2
	8. I think it is important that English teachers help students to better understand exchange people from other countries with whom they are likely to use English.	75.8	67.1
	9. I think it is important that students become familiar with the culture and traditions of native speakers of English.	65.9	49.4
	20. I think it is important to teach students to be aware of intercultural differences and encourage them to talk about such differences.	87.9	62.4
Language used in class	13. I think a bilingual approach where Persian is used as a support in English language classes is more effective for Iranian students.	52.7	58.8
	17. I think it is important to teach students strategies of effective code-switching between English and Persian.	65.9	49.4

Responses by Pre and In-service Teachers

Descriptive statistics represented in table 5 reveal that 60 percent of the respondents ranked 20 statements of the questionnaire highest. It means that they expressed their strong agreement with 4 items associated with different models of English (using native-speaker models for teaching materials, trying to sound like native speakers, confusion of introducing various English accents in class, and importance of choosing classroom materials from either American or British models), 1 item related to using English for communication (the focus of an English program should be teaching students to use it in real-life communication), all 4 items concerning the role of language and culture (the importance of using English by the

students to share information about their own culture, the importance of helping students to understand other people with whom they are likely to use English, the importance of making students familiar with culture of the native speakers, and to make students aware of the intercultural difference), and two items related to language used in class (the effectiveness of using a bilingual approach in class and the importance of teaching code-switching strategies between English and Persian). As results show item 14 (the major focus of an English program should be teaching students to use the language in real-life communication) ranked as the highest among both pre-service teachers (%93.4) and teachers (%83/5). Items 7 (the importance of using English by the students

Components	Questions	Completely agree/agree	
		Pre-service	In-service
Attitudes towards models of English	3. I don't think it is necessary for my students to sound like native speakers to be proficient speakers of English.	30.8	40
	4. I think it is important that students be exposed to English spoken by a range of speakers (e.g., Australians, Indians, Africans, etc.).	39.6	45.9
	10. I think it is important that students be exposed to English used by proficient second language speakers.	50.5	43.5
	11. I think it is important that classroom materials provide a range of models of English used by L1 and L2 speakers.	50.5	42.4
	18. I think native speakers of English should be the role model for Iranian students.	54.9	47.1
	19. Being proficient in English means being able to behave like a native speaker of English.	26.4	32.9
	15. I think an important focus of an English program should be to prepare students for communication with people who are not English native speakers.	40.7	45.9
Attitudes towards using	12. I think English should be used as the only medium of instruction in English language classes.	25.3	24.7
Language used in class	16. Using Persian in class makes it more difficult for students to develop effective meaning negotiation strategies.	29.7	41.2

to share information about their own culture) and 20 (to make students aware of the intercultural difference) were ranked as the second highest.

Table 7 represents 9 items which ranked as completely disagree or disagree by nearly %50 of the participants. Six of the items were associated with different models of English (it is not necessary for students to sound like native speakers to be proficient speakers of English, it is important to expose students to English spoken by a range of native speakers like Indians, it is important to expose students to English used by proficient second language speakers, it is important to choose classroom materials from a range of models of English used by L1 and L2 speakers, native speakers of English should be the role model for Iranian students, and being proficient in English means being able to behave like a native speaker of English), one item related to using English for communication (the important focus of preparing students for communication with people who are not English native speakers), and two items concerning language used in class (English should be used as the only medium of instruction and using Persian in class makes

it more difficult for students to develop effective meaning negotiation strategies). Item 12 (English should be used as the only medium of instruction) ranked as the lowest level of agreement among pre-service (%25.3) and teachers (%24.7) item 16 (using Persian in class makes it more difficult for students to develop effective meaning negotiation strategies) and 19 (being proficient in English means being able to behave like a native speaker of English) also received the second lowest level of agreement by both groups of the participants.

Table 7 represents the descriptive findings regarding the attitude of respondents towards English as a lingua franca. Means and standard deviations of the pre-service and in-service EFL teachers are 3.44, ± 0.84 and 3.55, ± 1.07 respectively. The highest agreement among the pre-service teachers and in-service teachers is related to the category of the role of language and culture with mean and standard deviation of 3.98 ± 0.71 and 3.21 ± 1.13 respectively.

Table 7. Descriptive Statistics

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Attitudes towards models of English	Pre-service English teacher	91	3.22	.91	.09
	In-service English teacher	85	3.19	1.13	.12
Attitudes towards using English for communication	Pre-service English teacher	91	3.84	.78	.08
	In-service English teacher	85	3.58	.87	.09
The role of language and culture	Pre-service English teacher	91	3.98	.71	.07
	In-service English teacher	85	3.75	1.02	.11
Language used in class	Pre-service English teacher	91	3.24	.87	.09
	In-service English teacher	85	3.22	1.13	.12
Attitudes towards English as Lingua Franca	Pre-service English teacher	91	3.44	.84	.08
	In-service English teacher	85	3.35	1.07	.11

In order to investigate the attitudes of the pre-service and in-service teachers' toward ELF individually one sample t-test was used. Table 8 shows the results. As it can be seen this attitude is significant among the pre-service teachers ($t=5.03$, $sig=0.0001<0.05$). The attitude towards understanding models of English, using English for communication, the role of language and culture, and language used in class are significant ($sig<0.05$). Since mean ($m=3.44$) is higher than 3 (the test mean), the pre-service teachers' attitude towards ELF is positive. The in-service teachers' attitude towards ELF is also positive

($t=2.99$, $sig=0.004<0.05$). The mean ($m = 3.35$) is higher than the test mean ($m=3$). This attitude is meaningful for using English for communication and the role of language and culture ($sig<0.05$), but it is not meaningful for understanding models of English ($t=1.55$, $sig=0.123>0.05$) and language used in class ($t=1.77$, $sig=0.080>0.05$). Since the mean difference from the test mean is +3, it can be concluded that the in-service teachers had a neutral attitude (neither agree nor disagree) towards these two components of the questionnaire.

Table8. *One-Sample t-test*

group		Test Value = 3							
		Mean	Std. Deviation	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
Pre-service English teacher	Attitudes towards models of English	3.22	.91	2.36	90	.020	.225	.04	.41
	Attitudes towards using English for communication	3.84	.78	10.21	90	.000	.840	.68	1.00
	The role of language and culture	3.98	.71	13.21	90	.000	.983	.84	1.13
	Language used in class	3.23	.87	2.62	90	.010	.239	.06	.42
	Attitudes towards English as Lingua Franca	3.44	.84	5.03	90	.000	.441	.27	.62
In-service English teacher	Attitudes towards models of English	3.19	1.13	1.55	84	.123	.191	-.05	.44
	Attitudes towards using English for communication	3.58	.87	6.20	84	.000	.582	.39	.77
	The role of language and culture	3.75	1.02	6.78	84	.000	.752	.53	.97
	Language used in class	3.22	1.13	1.77	84	.080	.217	-.03	.46
	Attitudes towards English as Lingua Franca	3.35	1.07	2.99	84	.004	.348	.12	.58

In order to answer the second research question (Is there any significant difference between Iranian pre-service and in-service EFL teachers in terms of their attitudes toward English as Lingua Franca?) independent t-test was used. As the results reveal (table 9) the pre-service teachers'

mean towards models of English is 3.22 and this figure is 3.19 for the in-service teachers. The findings of the independent t-test showed that there is no meaningful difference between these two groups of respondents' attitude on ELF ($t=0.217$, $sig=0.83>0.05$). The pre-service teachers'

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means				
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
Attitudes towards models of English	Equal variances assumed	5.51	.020	.217	174	.83	.03	.15
	Equal variances not assumed			.215	160.92	.83	.03	.14
Attitudes towards using English for communication	Equal variances assumed	.03	.869	2.08	174	.04	.24	.12
	Equal variances not assumed			2.07	169.34	.04	.254	.12
The role of language and culture	Equal variances assumed	12.61	.000	1.75	174	.08	.23	.13
	Equal variances not assumed			1.73	148.49	.09	.23	.13
Language used in class	Equal variances assumed	12.32	.001	.14	174	.89	.021	.15
	Equal variances not assumed			.14	157.37	.89	.021	.15
Attitudes towards English as Lingua Franca	Equal variances assumed	6.61	.011	.64	174	.52	.093	.14
	Equal variances not assumed			.64	158.74	.52	.093	.15

mean for using English for communication is 3.84 and this figure is 3.58 for the teachers. The results revealed that there is no meaningful difference between both groups' attitude on using English for communication ($t=2.08$, $sig=0.04<0.05$); however, pre-service teachers had a more positive view in regard of this. The pre-service teachers' mean for the role of language and culture is 3.98 and this figure is 3.75 for the in-service teachers. The findings show no significant difference between both groups' view toward this component of the questionnaire ($t=1.75$, $sig=0.08>0.05$). The pre-service teachers' mean towards language used in class is 3.24 and this figure is 3.22 for the teachers. The independent t-test did not show any significant difference between these two

means ($t=0.14$, $sig=0.89>0.05$). The findings showed that there is no significant difference between the groups' total attitude towards ELF ($t=0.64$, $sig=0.52>0.05$) and the pre-service and in-service teachers means were 3.44 and 3.35 respectively.

Table9. *Independent Samples Test*

5. Discussion

The aim of this research was to explore pre-service and in-service Iranian English teachers' attitudes on the concepts connected with English as lingua franca in a context where English is taught and learnt as a foreign language. It also aimed at finding differences among the two groups in this regard. In order to answer the first research

question, the results showed that the respondents expressed a positive view toward many principles associated with ELF. They agreed that language and culture are not separate from each other and students should get familiar with intercultural differences, they also believed that the main purpose of learning English is using it in real-life communication especially with native speakers, using students' mother tongue in class was also considered as a facilitative factor in learning English. These findings support the observations made in previous studies in which English was taught as a foreign language (Sung, 2019; Seidlhofer, 2017; Wang & Ho, 2013). The findings of the present study showed that the participants were of the opinion that English is not a language belonging to a specific country as it has gone beyond its original borders and is being used as a means of communication by many people around the world. The high percentages of the participants' total agreement with using English in real life communication can confirm this inference. This result is consistent with the current principles and theories related to ELF. As it is maintained by some scholars (e.g., Galloway & Rose, 2015; Jenkins, 2015), the present English is used by a vast number of people from various lingua-cultural backgrounds in different contexts which are intercultural, multilingual, variable, and dynamic, and henceforth is not peculiar to one specific group of speakers.

However, an in-depth analysis of the findings revealed a primary tendency towards NS norms among both pre-service and in-service teachers. The participants' views toward international models of English or world Englishes were not positive. It appears that they did not tend to be recognized as Persian through their non-native accent as it is shown by the lowest percentages of the responses related to the items in the domain of English models like it is not necessary for students to sound like native speakers to be proficient speakers of English or it is important that students be exposed to English spoken by a range of speakers like Indians. On the contrary, it seemed that conforming to NS norms was

firmly established in most of them when they preferred to use NS models like American or British in preparing teaching materials and they thought that it is important for students to try to sound like native speakers of English. This view is in line with the findings of the studies in the field of second language learning and accent (e.g., Nushi, 2019; Park, 2017). This orientation to NS norms in a classroom setting might be justified by the fact that as it is reflected in the demographical information that most of the respondents in both groups of the pre-service and in-service teachers have never been to a foreign country (91.20 % and 68.23% respectively) and that their own English learning mostly happened in Iranian schools where educational materials typically contain British and American norms of NSs. This point is also recognized by some scholars (e.g., Galloway & Rose, 2017; Sung, 2019) when they note that there is a significant difference between the English language which is taught in the classroom context and the English employed outside the classroom. Yet this does not convey that they had a negative view about their own cultural identity as almost all of them agreed completely with the items related to component of the role of language and culture in the questionnaire including the importance of using English to share information about their own culture and traditions. These results are in line with those found in the studies of Sung (2015) and Ren, Chen and Lin (2019) concerning the intricate relationship between ELF and identity.

In addition, the findings did not prove any significant difference between the pre-service and in-service teachers' attitude toward ELF. However, the pre-service teachers' mean on their attitude toward using English for communication was higher than that of the in-service teachers. Their age might be one possible reason. The younger generation of teachers has been grown up in a progressively globalized world in which they have more opportunity to communicate with people from other various linguistic and cultural backgrounds (Seidlhofer, 2010). This finding is also

supported by other investigations in which young teachers were more preoccupied with the principles concerning ELF and while talking about the real-life using of English outside the classroom context, they were not quite willing to abide by the standards of the NSs and agreed with meaningful communication rather than native-like proficiency (e.g., Fazilatfar & Barzegar Rahatloo, 2018, Litzenberg, 2014).

6. Conclusion

Owing to the impacts of technology, media, and trade among others, English is currently used as the language of international communication. This has resulted in efforts by researchers to investigate how it is used by many speakers in different settings across the world. Even though the number of English speakers is growing very fast, its teaching especially to the users in expanding circle countries has followed traditional approaches. As a consequence, this has made some researchers (e.g., Curran & Chern, 2017; Leyi, 2020) think that learners are not well prepared for the challenges they might encounter when they have to use English in their future employment or academic work.

In an attempt to shed more light on the position of ELF in a country in the expanding circle, the present study examined the Iranian pre and in-service EFL teachers' attitude towards ELF-related issues. The results were in line with the existing literature in which unsure attitudes prevail among the respondents. Although they seemingly agreed using students' first language in the classroom is effective, code-switching strategies are helpful and students should use English to share information about their own culture, the findings appeared to imply that NS norms are still the standard against which the Iranian students' level of proficiency can be measured. These results suggest that they are not completely aware of the principles and theories connected to ELF, although their attitudes on using English for communication in various real-life communications outside the classroom might help us remain optimistic

about the future. Hence, it is hoped that this study can encourage the teacher educators to plan teacher training programs which can lead to improving prospective EFL teachers' knowledge of present world sociolinguistic realities and mainly subjects related to ELF. Moreover, further qualitative studies are required to examine to what extent teacher educators, pre-service teachers, teachers and students are aware of ELF. It should be mentioned that even though the in-service teachers in the current study were selected from different parts of the country, the pre-service teachers were only chosen from Tehran province, therefore it is not sensible to generalize the results to other pre-service teachers from various parts of the country since context has a major impact on their attitude toward ELF.

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