



## **Adapting English Language Education to the EIL Framework: A Case Study of Expanding Circle Countries**

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### Abstract

The pluricentricity of English language has led to the appearance of new trends in English language education. This is especially important in Expanding Circle (EC) countries to develop intercultural communication among learners. The current study attempted to investigate the views of Iranian English teachers towards the relevancy of English as an international language (EIL) to their practice of English language teaching and the influence of teacher education on shaping their attitudes. To this end, a mixed method sequential research design was used to collect data, using a questionnaire delivered to 115 EC teachers who, at the time, were taking an online teacher education workshop held in a Language Institute in Tehran regarding EIL and varieties of English. Subsequently, semi-structured interviews were carried out with 34 teachers who had expressed their agreement to be interviewed. The analysis of the data showed that although the EC teachers had mostly expressed positive perceptions about EIL and varieties of English, their perceptions misaligned with their practices in ELT classes. The mismatch between teachers' conception of EIL and its relevance to their context of teaching seemed to have undermined their self-confidence in applying this concept to practice. They seemed to have taken it for granted that American English is the sole variety to be practiced in Iran, as it is considered the most desirable target language variety. Implications of the results for educators and policy-makers on bridging the gap between theory and practice in ELT classes are presented.

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## **Introduction**

More than 2 billion bilinguals are now using English regularly as an additional language (EAL) (Graddol, 2006), and English holds an official position in more than 70 nations in the globe (Crystal, 2003; Schneider, 2011). Although it is believed that L1 users are the main owners of English (Matsuda, 2019), intercultural communication usually occurs among English users from the Outer-Circle (OC) and Expanding-Circle (EC) nations (Dewaele, 2018; Monfared, 2020; Sharifian & Sadeghpour, 2021) and this has led to the appearance of new “World Englishes” (WEs), a reality that has made English Language Teaching (ELT) professionals mindful of how to align ELT courses with the pluricentricity of English in the world today. This mentality, as an outcome of the significance of EIL in today’s English language communication, has functioned as a breeding ground for the increasing popularity of teaching English as an international language (TEIL) particularly in multicultural contexts.

The role of ELT classrooms as a preparatory venue for the inception of a shift toward the present-day status of English as a pluricentric language and the orientation towards intercultural communication, the conventional disciplines such as teacher education need to be transformed consistent with the viewpoint of EIL (Jenkins, 2015; Kirkpatrick, 2015; Matsuda, 2017, 2019). McKay and Brown (2016) argue that one solution for the metamorphosis of English into WEs in ELT classes is to abandon the idealized native speaker norms and use instead the term Global English Standards (GES). The reality of Global Englishes sidesteps the sense that native speakers are the sole owners of English and patrons of its standards; it instead promotes the concept that English is the property of its users in the globe who have contributed to the emergence of its new varieties. Teaching English as a pluricentric language needs teachers and learners to stick to their own English varieties in ELT classes and keep distance from native speaker norms in organizing communication (Graddol, 2006; McKay & Brown, 2016). As Dewaele (2018) mentions foreign English users (LX users of English) are the gatekeepers of the language and their communicative needs should form the backbone of ELT syllabuses.

The paradigm shift from TEFL/TESL to TEIL has also encouraged many instructors and policy makers to integrate EIL principles with ELT. The implication is that new curricula are expected to be developed based on local and international cultures (Marlina & Giri, 2013; McKay, 2018; Monfared et al., 2016; Sadeghpour & Sharifian, 2019) and changes to be made in teaching methodology accordingly (Brown, 2013; Jenkins, 2015; Kumaravadivelu, 2012). From an EIL perspective, the main goal of TEIL should be to empower foreign language users to interact with L1 speakers in multicultural contexts. In a globalised context, McKay and Brown (2016) argue that raising awareness of teachers towards varieties of English necessitates the implementation of TEIL in ELT classes. McKay and Brown (2016) further point out that English education should put an emphasis on intercultural communication skills that raise LX learners’ awareness towards English in multilingual and multicultural contexts. Overall, teachers should adopt a holistic approach that takes into account the linguistic, cultural and contextual factors that shape English language use around the world. By doing so, they can help their students become competent and confident communicators in a globalized world.

Although an ongoing line of studies on the pluricentricity of English language has explored the rapidly changing status of English in the globalized world (Ahn, 2017; Jenkins, 2007, 2015; Kirkpatrick, 2015; Kirkpatrick & Sussex, 2012; McKay and Brown, 2016; Schneider, 2014; Shin & Walkinshaw, 2023; Xu, 2010; Zhang, 2022), there are few research studies investigating the perceptions of teachers concerning their preferred teaching models from an EIL perspective in ELT contexts. Considering Iran as an Expanding-Circle country, the extent to which different varieties of English are considered or applied in practice has, to a large extent, remained unexplored. Traditionally, AmE, as a native speaker model, has been the centre of attention in organizing instruction in this context (Richards & Sadeghi, 2015; Sadeghpour & Sharifian, 2019; Sharifian & Sadeghpour, 2021). The implication is that pedagogical debates about the relevancy of EIL and its role in preparing language learners to face the paradigm shift in international communication in English has largely been absent from the agenda of ELT professionals in Iran. The current research tries to investigate the attitudes of Iranian English instructors concerning EIL and varieties of English and their preferred pedagogical models.

### **Literature Review**

Given the pedagogy of TEIL, there is an increasing discussion at the theoretical level on the need for changes to ELT in the light of the expansion of EIL (Ahn, 2017; Canagarajah, 2006; Jenkins, 2006; Kachru, 1992; Kramsch, 2014; Matsuda, 2012, 2019; McKay, 2002, 2018; Sadeghpour & Sharifian, 2019). As Sharifian (2014, 35) mentions, it is a major challenge to answer to the following question: “Which varieties of English and whose culture should be included in ELT courses?” The complexity of the task is also indicated by the recommendation made to revise the description of English proficiency (Canagarajah, 2006; Kirkpatrick, 2015; Sharifian, 2009, 2017). In today’s multicultural contexts, proficient speakers of English are those who are familiar with the pluricentricity of cultural schema and linguistic varieties in intercultural communication (Canagarajah, 2006; Kirkpatrick, 2015). It is important to understand that cultural competency is more than a set of skills. It is rather a set of minds which implies that there can be various ways of learning and doing. Cross-cultural competence recognizes the fact that preferences are involved in the selection of regional, social, and international varieties of English. It also involves the need for being aware of what can be an obstacle to learning and demonstration of learning among LX speakers. A recent trend proposed by Liddicoat et al. (2003) and followed by a number of ELT researchers is intercultural communicative language teaching (iCLT). The term iCLT, under the framework of principles proposed by Liddicoat et al. (2003), Liddicoat (2004), and Newton et al. (2010), focuses on raising teachers’ and learners’ awareness of the relationship between culture and language and its concomitant conclusion that varieties of English should be included in ELT syllabuses based on the exigencies of local and international cultures (Alsagoff, 2012; Low, 2022). Accordingly, McKay and Brown (2016, 97) outline the following points pertaining to EIL which should be taken into account in ELT:

1. Valuing the culture of LX users and fostering a feeling of possession in the local culture of the learners

2. Raising awareness of LX users with differences in language and culture in various settings in which English is used
3. Including models in ELT syllabus based on local realities of language use to assist learners to assume the mindset of “both local and global users of English” capable of using English both nationally and internationally

Although there have been numerous studies indicating the integration of EIL into ELT courses, empirical studies have revealed that the majority still favours IC Englishes, more precisely American and British varieties of English as linguistic models in ELT courses worldwide. This is evident from previous studies (Ahn, 2014, 2017; Jenkins and Leung, 2014; Matsuda, 2003; Timmis, 2002). Jenkins and Leung (2014) found that most teachers lack knowledge about WEs and tend to view native-speaker mode of English as the ideal model for teaching.

There are several studies exploring the role of EIL in ELT, specifically focusing on teachers' knowledge, perceptions, and training. Most of these studies have concentrated on the relation of EIL to ELT in contexts where English is acquired as an additional language (EAL) or as a second language (L2) (Ahn, 2013, 2014; Matsuda, 2019; Sadeghpour & Sharifian, 2019; Sifakis and Sougari, 2005). Sadeghpour & Sharifian (2019) found that most of the participants from all Kachruian circles perceived WEs pertinent to ELT in Australia; Nevertheless, they held the viewpoint that incorporating WEs into ELT might lack feasibility and should not extend beyond cultivating learners' recognition of the diverse nature of English. Another study conducted by Sifakis and Sougari (2005) revealed that while Greek teachers recognized the importance of WEs, they were unsure of how to incorporate them into their teaching practices and lacked the necessary resources and training.

While there is a number of studies designed to explore and promote the recognition of EIL in IC and OC contexts among ELT teachers (Ates, Eslami, & Wright, 2015; Kubota, 2001), not enough attention has been given to how TEIL is applied to ELT courses in EC countries. To fill out this gap, the current research aims to examine the extent to which EC English language teachers, in the case of the present study Iranian teachers, apply TEIL in their teaching.

With regard to the aforementioned issues regarding a paradigm shift from traditional pedagogy in ELT to TEIL in Iran as an EC country, this research endeavours to find answers to the following research questions:

- 1) What are Iranian English teachers' perceptions about EIL?
- 2) How did the experience of participating in a workshop regarding EIL and varieties of English influence the Iranian teachers' perceptions about EIL?

## Method

### Participants

The present study was conducted with a group of pre-service and in-service teachers taking a teacher professional development workshop regarding TEIL in a TESOL program at an English

institute in Tehran, Iran. A total of 115 English teachers volunteered to participate in the research study after receiving an invitation email with a link to a website (www.esurveycreator.com). The website provided information about the study's objectives and the tasks expected from the teachers. The selection of participants in this research was based on their availability. Convenience sampling, a widely employed method in psychology research (Ness-Evans & Rooney, 2011), was used to choose the participants. The participant teachers had their major in TEFL, Literature, or Translation and taught in an English language center in Tehran with branches in different cities of Iran. All the teachers held TESOL certificates. The authors maintained direct interaction with the participant through LinkedIn academic social network (www.linkedin.com). Table 1 shows a general profile of the study participants.

**Table 1.** *General profile of participants*

<b>Participants' general Information</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
<b><i>Gender</i></b>	
Male	60
Female	55
<b><i>Educational Background</i></b>	
BA degree	52
MA degree	55
PhD	8
<b><i>Age</i></b>	
21-30	25
31-40	42
41-50	25
50 +	23

**Design of the Study**

The data was gathered from the participants through the questionnaire before and after the teacher professional development workshop. This workshop which lasted about 30 hours was developed based on EIL and culture concepts. During the workshop, one of the researchers provided the teachers with activities regarding EIL and culture and the way that EIL and culture are intertwined. All workshop sessions were video recorded. The instructions were presented through PowerPoints slides, discussions and lectures.

**Instrument**

The present study gathered data through a combination of quantitative and qualitative research tools. The quantitative data was collected using a 14-item questionnaire developed by Lee and Hsieh (2018). This questionnaire aimed to assess teachers' perceptions across four dimensions: 1) the current status of English (CSE) (items 1 to 3); 2) varieties of English (VE) (items 4 to 7); 3) strategies for multilingual/multicultural communication (SMC) (items 8 to 11); and English speakers' identity (ESI) (items 12 to 13). To assess participants' perceptions, a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 "strongly disagree" to 5 "strongly agree" was used in the current study. The questionnaire by Lee and Hsieh (2018) was considered a reliable and valid instrument. The Cronbach's alpha for all factors of the questionnaire passed the minimum

threshold of 0.7 and the construct validity was assessed through convergent validity analysis which proved to be significant (Fornell and Larcker 1981).

### **Procedure**

In the current study, Initially the questionnaire was piloted with a group of 30 participants. To guarantee the clearness of the items, they were translated into Persian.

The final version of the questionnaire was sent to 450 EFL teachers who were working at an English language institute with the main center in Tehran and with branches all over Iran. The respondents were requested to answer the questionnaire items carefully and do not hesitate to email researchers in case of any ambiguities.

After administering the questionnaire, interviews were conducted with 34 teachers who had formerly completed the questionnaire and had willingly volunteered for the interviews. According to Birello (2012), interviews are considered the most effective method for gathering valuable information on teachers' knowledge, perceptions, and attitudes. Regarding research ethics, the teachers were assured that their privacy would be valued and that the data collected would solely be used for research goals.

### **Data Analysis**

In order to assess the construct validity, factor analysis was utilized (Dobakhti,2020). In this analysis, a minimum eigenvalue of 1, factor loadings greater than 0.5, and communality values exceeding 0.5 were utilized (Hair et al., 1998). The second factor to consider when determining the appropriateness of conducting factor analysis is the inter-correlations among the items in the questionnaire. This criterion can be assessed using Bartlett's test of sphericity and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure. In this case, the KMO value was .79, surpassing the minimum acceptable index of .50 (Field, 2013). The questionnaire seemed to be reliable as the values of Cronbach's alpha for each construct was .74 (CSE), .75 (VE), .74 (SMC) and .76 (ESI) respectively which exceeded the threshold of 0.7, showing high internal consistency of the instrument. Construct validity was also checked through convergent validity and the average variance extracted (AVE) ranged from 0.55 to 0.60 which exceeded the normal range 0.50 (Fornell and Larcker 1981). The collected data were analysed using the research tool SPSS software.

In the following stage, interview recordings were transcribed and the transcriptions were subjected to thematic analysis (Selvi, 2020). The extracted themes were rechecked and then segments including probable replies to the research questions were coded to be used to complement the quantitative data of the study. To ensure reliability, an independent rater was also employed to code these sections. The interrater reliability was found to be .93; any discrepancies were resolved until a consensus was reached. The interviews lasted approximately 10 minutes and were audio-recorded with the participants' consent.

## Results

### Quantitative Data Analysis

As the descriptive statistics displayed in Table 2, the participants after participating in the workshop demonstrated an above-average agreement with all four main constructs encompassed within the questionnaire. The numerical data presented in Table 2 show that the first item (CSE1) was rated as the highest (M= 4.70, SD= .52) and item 13 was rated as the lowest overall. (M=3.10, SD= 1.18). The replies to item 13 (ESI2) (*I don't mind if someone laughs at me when I speak English with my own local accent because it is my own English.*) suggest that although the teachers held positive views towards EIL, intelligibility and varieties of English, they were still self-insecure about their own accents. In contrast, before the workshop, CSE received the highest positive responses, followed by VE, SMC and ESI. With regard to CSE addressing attitudes towards current status of English, most of the participants agreed that English is an international language used by multilingual and multicultural societies. In terms of VE aiming to assess attitudes towards varieties of English, most teachers accepted that listening materials should encompass a wide range of English varieties so that learners can develop a comprehensive understanding of diverse varieties of English accents and listening materials should contain interactions between non-native and non-native English speakers. With respect to multilingualism and multiculturalism in SMC, the participants agreed with awareness of multilingualism and multiculturalism and with fostering local cultures among LX users of English. Finally, concerning identity in ESI, Participants expressed their agreement with mutual intelligibility and fostering local identity of both local and global users of English. These and other results will be elaborated along with the interview results below.

**Table 2.** *Descriptive statistics of the items*

Constructs	Number of items	Pre-test Mean	Post-test Mean
CSE	3	3.80	4.60
VE	4	3.40	4.21
SMC	4	3.15	4.10
ESI	3	3.07	3.73
CSE	CSE1	3.95	4.70
	CSE2	3.75	4.46
	CSE3	3.70	4.64
VE	VE1	3.40	4.25
	VE2	3.34	4.35
	VE3	3.26	3.98
	VE4	3.60	4.26
SMC	SMC1	3.15	3.68
	SMC2	3.07	3.79
	SMC3	3.23	4.65
	SMC4	3.15	4.28
ESI	ESI1	3.11	4.10
	ESI2	2.90	3.10
	ESI3	3.20	4.01

CSE= Current Status of English, VE= Varieties of English, SMC= Strategies for Multilingual/Multicultural Communication, ESI= English Speakers' Identity

## Qualitative Data Analysis

The qualitative data gathered from instructors' replies to semi-structured interview questions was supposed to supplement the quantitative results in three ways: (1) by supplying teachers' attitudes towards native and non-native teachers (2) by explaining their views regarding EIL and varieties of English and (3) by elaborating on Potential implementation of EIL and teaching materials in ELT classes.

### Attitudes towards Native and Non-native Teachers

Most of the teachers pointed to the qualified teacher as someone who is professional and knowledgeable and has a friendly relationship with students. However, when teachers were requested to choose between native and non-native teachers, the majority of participants agreed that due to learners' goals in Iran (exam-oriented system), non-native teachers are preferred. Considering the exam-oriented education system in Iran, most teachers mentioned that non-native teachers are more familiar with learning difficulties of the learners and the structure of the university entrance exam. It can be stated that nearly all teachers in Iran believed that the learners' main objective for learning English is to pass university entrance exam. Here is a comment by participant seven who was against the presence of other varieties of English:

*I surely choose non-native teachers because I think the educational system of Iran is organized in a way that the expectation of the schools is to prepare learners for university entrance exam and not more. I think local teachers can help learners to get better grades in grammar and vocabulary. (Participant 7)*

The majority of participants pointed to non-native teachers' role as a bridge in cross-cultural communication to help learners preserve their own identities and interact with learners from other cultures:

*In my opinion, in monocultural classes, non-native teachers, non-native teachers can better expose learners to multiculturalism which can lead to socially and culturally aware learners. (participant 24)*

Nonetheless, some teachers were in favour of native teachers in cases where the goal is not success in the university entrance exam. These teachers believed that L1 teachers have a better command of English and they can provide learners with thorough information about the native culture. For example,

*In my opinion, a native teacher can provide learners with American English as a native model which is the perfect model of 'Standard English' and it can be the only model at school. Meanwhile, they can improve our communicative competence at a level comparable with English native speakers. (Participant 42)*

## **Understanding of EIL and Awareness towards Varieties of English**

The second category dealt with the notion of EIL and the participants' understanding of pluricentricity of English. All participants considered EIL as an important tool for enhancing mutual understanding in global communication. An example in point is given below:

*In my opinion, EIL raises the teachers' awareness towards multilingualism and multiculturalism among English users, and it helps learners develop a sense of confidence in their own local varieties. EIL helps learners to have friendly relationships with English users from different cultures. (Participant 28)*

Additionally, participants pointed to 'communicating with different cultures' as one of the chief goals of EIL, which may have affected teachers' cognitive attitude (Ahn, 2017) toward the necessity of teaching non-native varieties of English. As mentioned by one of the participants:

*Given the globalization of English and the development of hybrid-Englishes such as Indian English, Konglish, Chinglish and Engrish, mutual intelligibility is far more important than sticking to the native speaker model. (participant 42)*

The interviews demonstrated that teachers who came to an agreement, in principle, with the concept of the pluricentricity of English in ELT classes, claimed that familiarizing students with other varieties of English would better prepare them for communication in real situations. These teachers believed that, the expansion of communication as a result of the latest technological and communicative advancements, has fostered the awareness of the presence of world Englishes. However, they were concerned that this goal cannot be completely fulfilled. As an example, one of the participants stated:

*I think the need for the inclusion of 'other' Englishes might reduce the experience of 'being shocked' when travelling overseas. It can also prevent learners from developing prejudices against non-native Englishes and help them become familiar with different accents and varieties of English. (Participant 2)*

Furthermore, most teachers believed that understanding EIL is important for accepting variations in learners' Englishes, but this knowledge may not be necessary for English language learners at early stages as it could cause confusion. They believed that teaching varieties of English and incorporating them into the curriculum should be delayed until learners develop an advanced level of proficiency; otherwise, they would experience ambiguities. The following excerpt is an example in point:

*In my opinion, at early stages, it is not necessary for learners to know all variations of English. At the beginning, learners need to learn English not variations. I think learners can learn American English at first and then they can become familiar with varieties of English at advanced level of English proficiency. (Participant 45)*

Conversely, some teachers believed that EIL can play an important role to develop multiculturalism and intercultural communication in the global context.

Based on the results of this section, the interview findings confirm and expand the teachers' moderately high level of agreement with VE (M=4.20, SD= .91) and CSE (M= 4.60, Sd= .80).

### Potential Employment of EIL and Teaching Materials in ELT Classes

The third category dealt with the application of EIL principles to ELT materials. Although the majority of teachers had positive attitudes toward varieties of English and their implication for ELT courses, they still prioritized standard varieties of English. Considering the exam-oriented system of education in Iran, those participants who expressed their opposition to the inclusion of EIL argued that ELT courses should concentrate on teaching one model of English to meet learners' expectations, to avoid misunderstandings, and to facilitate learners' performance in language tests. Twenty-five teachers also emphasized the importance of Standard English and the superiority of the native accent over other accents, citing the washback effect as a key reason for requiring students to learn and constantly use either American or British English. They stressed that students must use native varieties consistently to succeed in formal assessment tasks. Given the washback effect of English tests which has led to an extreme focus on test preparation in education (Anani Sarab et.al, 2016), it is not surprising for teachers to develop negative attitudes towards World Englishes as all high-stake tests in Iran follow the native varieties of the English language. Therefore, although some teachers were in favour of including other Englishes in English education, due to these 'sad' realities, they were against the inclusion of other Englishes. Nine teachers also pointed to time constraints in the educational system as a key reason for excluding EIL from teaching practices, stating that teaching learners to communicate in EIL plays a less important role than their ability to perform in English language skills as they are used in exams.

Some views expressed by the participants displayed a misalignment between ideology and practice commitment in language revitalisation context (Eggington, 2010). Contrary to their beliefs, teachers have to present a pseudo identity to be accepted in ELT contexts. Some teachers reported that the implantation of native varieties of English (especially American English) was unavoidable since the educational system of Iran is highly dependent on L1 norms and teachers have to imitate a native-like identity (implementation of L1 models in their classes) in order to be accepted by learners and by their organization. So, one main reason why teachers resist teaching EIL may be due to the misunderstanding that teaching varieties of English might threaten their role as the instructor as the main source of knowledge in class. Therefore, teachers may avoid teaching what they cannot teach. For example:

*I'm sure that students should be familiarized with other Englishes and they should keep their own identity but my learners are just blind followers of AME and my language school forces me to follow the strict principles of school which is in favour of nativism. (Participant 17)*

Regarding the implementation of locally-produced ELT materials, most of the participants were in favour of the materials produced based on local culture but did not entirely reject materials from English-speaking countries. Nevertheless, teachers pointed to the incorporation

of native and global cultures in ELT materials to raise the learners' awareness of varieties of cultures in the world. For example:

*I think we should have a combination of local, native and international cultures in ELT materials. Locally-published materials can help promote our own culture and have a representation of daily lives and interests. Embracing varieties of cultures can lead to intercultural communication and learners from different cultures can easily communicate with each other. (Participant 25)*

### **Promoting the EIL Perspective among ELT Teachers**

The second research question intended to investigate how the experience of participating in a 20-hour workshop regarding EIL and varieties of English influenced teachers' attitudes towards EIL and varieties of English. The interviewees' responses show that the changes are evident in participants' attitudes before and after the workshop. The interview data indicated that the teachers' beliefs were mostly impacted in two ways. (1) Improvement of their knowledge and (2) raising awareness towards intelligibility and varieties of English.

The teachers mentioned that the workshop's topics regarding EIL and varieties of English raised their awareness of the shift in status of English and helped them change their view of American English as the sole appropriate variety for language education. For example:

*This workshop changed my attitude towards traditional ELT classes. Before the training course, American English was my favourite model. When I was introduced to EIL, multilingualism and multiculturalism, I understood that I should raise my learners' awareness towards varieties of English and I should provide them with linguistic and cultural differences to be able to interact with English speakers of different culture.*

Teachers also pointed that gaining knowledge regarding pluricentricity of English helped them to reshape their attitudes on pronunciation and concentrate more on shaping intelligibility standards in their ELT classes. They stated that this workshop helped them to be prouder and more confident of their own accent and also, they understood that they should not push their students to be blind followers of native models and should not force them to imitate native-like accents in their ELT classes. For example,

*Undoubtedly, this workshop helped me to broaden my view towards varieties of English and multiculturalism. I understood that I should focus more on intelligible communication than nativism and I should help my learners to be proud of their own accent and culture when learning English.*

### **Discussion**

In the present study, EC teachers' attitudes towards EIL and varieties of English were analyzed. The aim was to raise EC teachers' awareness of English in multilingual and multicultural contexts and to help them incorporate EIL principles in their ELT classes. As McKay and Brown (2016) propose the recruitment of well-trained instructors from local contexts, who

incorporate materials and activities that reflect both local and international contexts, can enhance the English learning experience for students. Traditional foreign language teaching, which emphasizes a separation between language and culture and favors L1 norms, may not adequately equip English learners to effectively communicate with speakers with diverse backgrounds (Kirkpatrick, 2015; Matsuda, 2019).

As far as the first research question is concerned, the examination of the numerical data showing participants' positive beliefs about English as an International Language (EIL), in conjunction with their interview replies, resulted in three primary categories based on significance. The first category deals with the teachers' attitudes towards L1 and LX English teachers. Nearly all participants' beliefs about their roles in teaching EIL were reshaped after teacher education workshop. During the interview, the participants' interest justified that LX teachers are more effective in promoting intercultural competence as they are more likely to have first-hand experience of navigating cultural and linguistic diversity and are better equipped to understand the challenges and opportunities that multilingualism and multiculturalism present. Although there are numerous stakeholders in the English Language Teaching (ELT) industry in Iran who may adhere to the belief that L1 teachers are the optimal language instructors, regardless of their qualifications in teaching (Tajeddin, Atai, and Pashmforoosh, 2020), an awareness of TEIL has impacted the participants' perspectives, leading them to put more emphasis on TEIL. Similar findings have been echoed in other studies emphasizing the important role of non-native English teachers in ELT classes. (Floris & Renandya, 2020)

The second category is concerned with the teachers' perception of EIL and their awareness of different English varieties. Nearly all the teachers pointed that before the workshop, American English was their only favourite model, but after training course, they considered EIL as an important tool in intercultural communication. Nearly all participants acknowledged the presence of other English varieties and prioritized intelligibility and comprehensibility over the attainment of a native-like accent. Similar results were observed in prior studies (McKay & Brown, 2016; Rahimi and Ruzrokh, 2016; Sharifian, 2015; Soruç & Griffiths, 2021; Wang and Wen, 2023) that suggest intelligibility and comprehensibility are emphasized over nativism by ELT teachers. This indicates a departure from the belief in the superiority of native speaker models. For instance, Wang and Wen (2023) emphasized the importance of adopting a well-rounded approach in the national syllabi and curriculum standards of China. They suggested that striking a balance between intelligibility and nativeness is crucial in order to establish practical and effective pronunciation goals. Similarly, Soruç and Griffiths (2021), mentioned that raising awareness of pre-service teachers towards intelligibility and EIL principles can help them to prepare learners for intercultural communication. Zhang (2022) and Monfared (2020) also describe the native model as unrealistic in teaching and that intelligibility and comprehensibility are important issues for multilingualism and multiculturalism.

The third category deals with the potential employment of LX models and teaching materials in teachers' future practice. Although the teachers mostly had positive views towards EIL and varieties of English, their beliefs misaligned with their practices in ELT classes. The mismatch between teachers' conception of EIL and its relevance to their context of teaching

seemed to have undermined their self-confidence in applying TEIL to practice. There are references to this dilemma in the past studies, too. (Ahn, 2014; Hamid, 2014; Hsu, 2016; Lai, 2008; Monfared, 2018, 2020). Matsuda (2012) argues that merely accepting changes in theory without implementing them in practice leaves many teachers feeling uncertain about their teaching methods. To address this issue, a curriculum that acknowledges the multilingual and multicultural nature of English worldwide must be developed and teachers must be trained to confidently integrate World Englishes into their ELT classes.

Considering the implementation of EIL in ELT materials, the course books used in the educational system of Iran should also be more tolerant of other Englishes and should be revised in a way to raise both teachers' and learners' awareness towards globalisation and localisation. As Li (2009,82) mentions, when English is learned by millions of speakers from multilingual and multicultural contexts, it is unacceptable that native-speaker norms act as an index for measuring LX users' lexico-grammatical appropriacy, discourse-pragmatic correctness and phonological accuracy in ELT courses. (Li, 2009, 82). This policy aligns with McKay's (2002) assertion that English as a global language should be incorporated as a pluricentric language in language teaching curricula and teaching materials. This is consistent with Matsuda's (2012) recommendation that ELT materials should include the linguistic and cultural varieties of EIL.

Considering the second research question, it is obvious that when teachers were interviewed after attending the workshop regarding EIL and varieties of English, in which intelligibility and EIL principles were discussed, they held a more positive attitude towards TEIL. This shows the importance of teacher education that has also been emphasised in other studies (Canagarajah, 2013, 2021; Galloway & Numajiri 2020; Jenkins, 2009; Matsuda & Friedrich, 2011; Prabjandee, 2019; Soruç, 2020; Zein, 2019). One study by Canagarajah (2013) found that many teachers struggle to balance the need for standard English with the recognition of the diversity of English language learners. Teacher education workshops can provide teachers with strategies for navigating these challenges and for incorporating EIL into their teaching in a meaningful way. The positive effect of the tailor-made workshop designed for the current study can be attributed to the teachers' awareness of the consequences of professional development on their teaching practice which can be a source empowerment and self-efficacy. Moreover, the treatment provided teachers with opportunity for reflection on the pluricentricity of English and its effect on their identity and practice (see Dobakhti, Zohrabi & Masoudi 2022; Dobakhti, Zohrabi & Masoudi, 2023)

## **Conclusion**

The results of the study revealed that how participants' enrolment and presence in the workshop regarding EIL and varieties of English informed their beliefs and favorably reshaped their attitudes and developed their knowledge towards TEIL in ELT classes and taught them how to prepare learners for intercultural communication. However, a mismatch was detected between what teachers' beliefs and their implemented practices in ELT classes. This misalignment shows the limitation put on teachers' practice from the context of teaching. One of these limitations mentioned by teachers is the role of the university entrance exam. The misalignment also shows that the transition from theory to practice is often hard to be implemented.

Although the results of current research cannot be generalized to other contexts, the findings of this study can help educators and policy makers in Iran to revise their practices to become truly international rather than to sticking to a biased monocultural perspective in language teaching. The findings of this study also show that teacher training course regarding EIL practices have the potential to mitigate the issue of belief, theory, practice alignment. Despite its valuable insights, this study has certain limitations. Firstly, it did not take into account demographic factors such as age and gender. Secondly, the impact of teacher training workshops on teachers' beliefs was solely examined through semi-structured interviews with a limited number of participants, rather than encompassing the entire study population.



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## Appendices

### Appendix A:

1. English is used today as an international language to communicate effectively with people from around the world.
2. Many non-native English-speaking countries currently use English as their official or working language.
3. English is the language of business, culture, and education around the world.
4. Different varieties of English, such as Hong Kong English, Indian English, and Singaporean English, are acceptable today.
5. Teachers can use English listening materials that include different varieties of English so that they can develop a comprehensive understanding of accent varieties of English such as Indian English/Singaporean English in their real-world encounters.
6. Different varieties of English, such as Indonesian English, Taiwanese English, and Japanese English, are acceptable today in ELT materials.
7. Teachers can include the interaction between non-native and non-native English speakers (e.g., Indonesian, Japanese speakers) in English listening materials.
8. I can adjust my conversational style according to my interactions with people of other cultural backgrounds.
9. I can explain my own culture and customs clearly in English to people from other cultures.
10. I am open-minded about accepting speaking/pronunciation patterns that are different from those of my home country.
11. I can behave appropriately according to English users' cultures I speak with.
12. English teachers should keep their own identity when they speak English.
13. I don't mind if I speak English with my own local accent when I speak because it is my own English.
14. It is unnecessary to speak like American or British English speakers as long as my English is intelligible (or understandable) to others.

### Appendix B: semi-structured interview questions

Do you believe non-native teachers are better than native teachers?

What Englishes are you familiar with? How much do you agree with the concept of the pluricentricity of English in ELT classes?

How did the workshop shape your view on EIL concept?

How much do you think that language learners should be exposed to different varieties of English?

What materials would you use in your future teaching? Local, international or native one?