

**DECONSTRUCTING NATIVE-SPEAKERISM: THEORETICAL
AND EMPIRICAL PERSPECTIVES ON ENGLISH AS A
LINGUA FRANCA IN GLOBAL HIGHER EDUCATION****Sobirova Dilafruz,**

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Abstract: *The traditional paradigm of English as a Second Language (ESL) has long been dominated by the "Native Speaker" (NS) model, which positions British or American norms as the ultimate pedagogical goal. However, as non-native speakers now outnumber native speakers by a ratio of approximately 3:1, the conceptualization of English has fundamentally shifted toward English as a Lingua Franca (ELF). This article examines the linguistic, psychological, and pedagogical implications of this shift. Through an analysis of the Lingua Franca Core (LFC) and the socio-psychological impact of "native-speakerism," the study argues that the insistence on native-like accents is not only sociolinguistically outdated but also counterproductive to communicative efficiency. The paper advocates for a curriculum centered on mutual intelligibility and accommodation strategies, proposing a democratic and pluralistic model for global English education.*

Keywords: *ELF, Native-speakerism, Lingua Franca Core (LFC), Intelligibility, Global Englishes, Linguistic Identity, Pedagogical Reform.*

Introduction.

In the contemporary globalized era, English has transcended its geographical and cultural origins to become the world's primary medium for

international science, diplomacy, and commerce. According to recent sociolinguistic statistics, there are over 1.5 billion English speakers worldwide, but only about 400 million of them are native speakers. This demographic reality necessitates a radical re-evaluation of how the language is taught and assessed.

For decades, the "Ideal Native Speaker" was the gold standard. Learners were encouraged to mimic the phonology and idiomaticity of a person born in London or New York. This model, however, fails to recognize that a significant majority of English interactions today occur between two non-native speakers—for instance, an Uzbek entrepreneur negotiating with a Chinese supplier. In such contexts, "correctness" is not defined by adherence to a specific national standard, but by the successful negotiation of meaning. This article explores the transition from ESL to ELF, highlighting the need for a post-native-speakerist pedagogy.

Theoretical framework.

To understand the position of ELF, one must refer to Braj Kachru's "Three Circles of English" model:

The Inner Circle: Countries like the UK, USA, and Australia, where English is the primary language. Historically, these nations were "norm-providing."

The Outer Circle: Post-colonial societies like India, Nigeria, and the Philippines, where English serves official functions. These are "norm-developing."

The Expanding Circle: Countries like Uzbekistan, China, and Japan, where English is learned as a foreign language for international communication. Historically, these were "norm-dependent."

The ELF movement argues that the Expanding Circle should no longer be dependent on Inner Circle norms. Instead, users in this circle are developing their own pragmatic and linguistic strategies that are perfectly valid for international communication.

The shift from English as a Second Language (ESL) to English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) is grounded in the empirical necessity of mutual intelligibility over the ideological pursuit of native-like perfection. Central to this transition is Jennifer Jenkins' groundbreaking concept of the Lingua Franca Core (LFC), which identifies the specific phonological and grammatical features that are essential for successful communication in a globalized context. Unlike traditional models that penalize any deviation from British or American standards, the LFC prioritizes features such as consonant systems, vowel length distinctions (e.g., the difference between "leave" and "live"), and correct word stress, while dismissing non-essential elements like the "th" sound or the third-person "-s" inflection. This linguistic realignment suggests that "correctness" is no longer a static property of the Inner Circle but a dynamic quality of the interaction itself. When two non-native speakers communicate, the success of their exchange depends not on their proximity to a native accent, but on their ability to maintain these core features while employing "accommodation strategies"—such as paraphrasing, repetition, and the strategic simplification of complex idioms.

However, the practical benefits of the ELF model are often obstructed by the pervasive ideology of "native-speakerism." This socio-psychological phenomenon constructs a hierarchy where the native speaker is the ultimate authority and the non-native speaker is viewed as an inherently deficient learner. This "deficiency model" has profound negative consequences on the learner's psyche, leading to what is known as Foreign Language Anxiety

(FLA). When students are forced to chase an unattainable phonetic ideal, they often experience a sense of linguistic insecurity and "linguistic schizophrenia"—a painful conflict between their authentic cultural identity and the artificial "native-like" persona they are expected to adopt. This anxiety acts as a cognitive filter, stifling fluency and preventing learners from utilizing their full communicative potential. By deconstructing the myth of the ideal native speaker, ELF pedagogy offers a path toward linguistic liberation. It validates the learner's local identity and accent, treating English not as a foreign guest to be imitated, but as a personal tool to be mastered. In this holistic view, the goal of English education shifts from the replication of a colonial standard to the empowerment of confident, intercultural sensitive global citizens who can negotiate meaning across linguistic borders without losing their own voice.

Discussion: reforming the ESL curriculum

For the ESL curriculum to remain relevant, it must undergo three major reforms:

From Imitation to Accommodation: Students should be taught how to simplify their language when their partner doesn't understand, rather than just memorizing idioms that might confuse a non-native listener.

Diverse Listening Materials: Instead of only listening to the BBC, students should be exposed to "Global Englishes"—listening to proficient speakers from India, Germany, or Brazil to train their ears for the diversity of the real world.

Conclusion

The shift toward English as a Lingua Franca is not an argument for "bad English" or "low standards." Rather, it is an argument for **realistic and democratic standards**. As English continues to evolve as a global property,

the power to define "correctness" is moving away from a few nations toward the global community.

By embracing ELF, we can reduce learner anxiety, promote intercultural respect, and focus on the primary goal of language: connection. The future of English education lies in producing speakers who are not mimics of the West, but effective, confident, and versatile global citizens.

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