Teaching English as an International/Lingua Franca or Mainstream Standard Language? Unheard Voices from the Classroom

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Abstract

Over the last two decades there has been an upsurge in the voices among TESOL/applied linguistics scholars calling for the teaching of English as an International (EIL) and Lingua Franca (ELF) language as opposed to the mainstream Standard English (MSE). These calls seem to be rather theoretical than empirical intellectual debates among those scholars without taking on board the voices of English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers and learners themselves as stakeholders. Focusing on a Sudanese EFL context, the present study therefore duly aims at empirically contributing to this intellectual debate by involving those stakeholders in the debate and by offering a reconciliatory third way forward. The study attempts to address two main research questions: (i) what kind of English(es) do Sudanese EFL teachers and learners want to teach, learn and identify with? And (ii) how do they view EIL and ELF language and to what extent are they willing to teach and learn this variety in the classroom? The study adopted a qualitative interview-based methodology and thirteen EFL teachers and learners took part in the investigation by allowing face-to-face interviews. Results of data analysis showed that both teachers and learners reportedly prefer to teach, learn and identify with the mainstream Standard English. They also showed unawareness of EIL/ELF as an emerging and competing variety to the MSE. Teachers and learners also reported varied views towards the potentials of teaching and learning EIL/ELF in the classroom. The pedagogical implications and insights for TESOL research and pedagogy were discussed.

Keywords: critical TESOL, English as a lingua franca, mainstream Standard English, new Englishes, Sudanese EFL context

Cite as: Alhassan, A. (2017 Teaching English as an International/Lingua Franca or Mainstream Standard Language: Unheard Voices from the Classroom. *Arab World English Journal*, 8 .(3)
DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol8no3.29>