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Investigating the Awareness of ELF among College of Education Tutors in the Ashanti Region of Ghana

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Abstract:

The study sought to investigate ELF awareness among CoE tutors of English in Ashanti Region of Ghana. This study employed the descriptive survey design. A total 48 participants were selected from 8 Colleges of Education for the study using the purposive sampling. Data were collected using a six-point Likert-type scale questionnaire. Data analysis and presentation of results were done using Mean and Standard Deviation. The study revealed that ELF awareness can help improve practice in terms of assessment, and designing test items around attainable non- native speaker norms. The study further indicated that ELF awareness is beneficial and therefore the need for it. It was recommended that Tutors should seek ways of acquiring attitudes that can help them create congenial atmosphere for teaching and learning as/ this is needed by students to understand what their teachers teach them.

Keywords: Awareness, English, ELF, CoE, tutors, variety

1. Introduction

As an outer circle variety, English in Ghana has over the years been traveling the delicate expansionist road of creativity, adaptation, and preservation of standards. On all stages, including vocabulary and pronunciation, the distinctive Ghanaian language and cultural coloration continues to permeate the English language (Adika, 2012). The works of Sey (1973) and Dako (2003) are undoubtedly the two key contributions to the documentation of Ghanaianisms, identified as vocabulary items in Ghana that are peculiar to English and used by educated Ghanaians who speak English. The distinction between the two studies lies in the fact that the first has immense historical importance, with perhaps the highest citation index being the seminal work on English in Ghana, while the far more recent second derives its strength from the sheer number of glossary entries. In fact, although Sey discusses about 350-400 entries, in Sey's early 1970s publication, Dako's entries total about 3000, almost ten times the number of entries. Such Ghanaianisms have arisen primarily through coinages, and semantic processes involving semantic extension or restriction, or a mixture of both, semantic transfer and semantic alteration.

The fact that the 20th century has seen an unparalleled global spread of English is an undisputable fact (Fang, 2017). The spread of English is due to the forces of globalization defined by Crystal (2003) and has influenced communication throughout the world. English is used as a tool and as a language of contact among individuals of another L1 (Firth, 1996). It has also become a lingua franca or a medium of communication (Jenkins, 2006). It should be stressed that the international recognition gained by the English language, as well as the fact that non-native speakers of native speakers of English far outnumber native speakers, illustrate their outstanding development into an international lingua franca (Crystal, 2003). English as a lingua franca (or ELF) can be described as the discourse created by speakers of different first multilingual and multicultural environments and their norms associated historically and culturally with standard English in interactions (Seidlhofer, 2011). Its linguistic, pragmatic and cultural versatility is the distinguishing characteristic of the ELF as a means of communication appropriated by individual interlocutors under complex communicative conditions (Jenkins, 2015; Mauranen, 2012; Seidlhofer, 2011).

A diverse field of research is delineated by the ELF construct. The idea of ELF knowledge is intended to serve as an understanding of the involvement of educators and learners with the build, as well as other ELT stakeholders (e.g., policy makers, curriculum designers, textbook writers, evaluators and testers). The advantages of connecting ELF with the classroom of English Language Teaching (ELT) stem from the understanding of the English language learner as an effective English user in their own right. In an environment where English interactions between speakers of different L1 abound, the ability to communicate effectively by reacting to the cognitive and communication needs of other interlocutors is important. The second language (ESL) classroom can be reassured by these communication techniques that underlie effective ELF-oriented interactions, thereby benefiting non-native learners. Nevertheless, as ELF scientists have shown (e.g., Jenkins, 2015; Mauranen, 2012; Seidlhofer, 2011), understanding ELF involves coming to grips with a reasonable amount of theory that might not be accessible instantly to people other than applied linguists and discourse analysts. In view of these claims, English Language tutors in Ghana's Colleges of Education should be made aware of the multifaceted reality of the English Language today, its uses, its users, WE's pluralistic viewpoint and ELF's heterogeneity.

In order to do this, these tutors must have an informed understanding of the ELF paradigm in order to build a vital sense of their own conviction.

CoE English tutors continue to set unattainable targets, use unfriendly courses and conventional ELT approaches. Students continue to suffer unduly, not because they are linguistically deficient or unintelligible, but because they are not taken into account in the curriculum preparation and their needs are not addressed for that matter. ELT research has shown that ELF is a valid ingredient in the language learning experience of learners (Kormos, Kidl&Csizer, 2011; Kubota & McKay, 2009; Ranta, 2010). It has become clear that for the ELT classroom, the ELF raises pedagogical consequences. This causes English language teachers to focus critically on ELF and how to develop their approach to ELT. This will go a long way towards making a positive effect on their students. No documented studies have been undertaken in Ghana to inform theory and practice, in spite of the possibility that ELF promises ELT. It is against this context that this study is being carried out among CoE English tutors to investigate ELF knowledge. The worldwide promotion of English that led to English being the new lingua franca may be due to economic, cultural, and social factors, but it is a fact that 'English has been successfully promoted and embraced in the worldwide linguistic market' (Phillipson, 1992, p. 7).

English tutors at Colleges of Education need to be told about the primary WE and ELF issues. Eventually, the English spoken, written and taught in Ghana is recognized in WE as a variety and English continues to play a role in globalization, and tutors in education colleges need to be made aware of the language's multifaceted reality. It should be noted that English is changing, and the emphasis in the classroom on English has changed (Takahashi, 2010). English language tutors in the CoE are not aware of the update, hence the need to build awareness of these shifts. The role of ELF is a valid ingredient in the language learning experience of learners. It has become clear that ELF has consequences for ELT classrooms and this allows educators to critically focus on ELF. (Bayyurt&Sifakis, 2015a, 2015b; Lopriorie, 2016) Unfortunately, no known research on ELF in Ghana has been conducted to inform practice, hence a study among College of Education tutors to investigate the knowledge of ELF.

As Moussu and Llorca (2008, p. 331) say, 'it can only be advantageous for them to expose ESL and EFL students to different accents and cultures' and 'exposing all English speakers to as many varieties of English as possible will do more to ensure intelligibility than attempting to enforce a single norm on all' (D'souza, 1999, p. 273). This means increasing awareness of language differences and that communication is about negotiating meaning (Erling, 2005). While ELF work is more useful in international contexts for students learning English, as Matsuda (2002) points out, exposure to non-native English (NNE) can also increase familiarity, understanding of listening, decrease assumptions that only NESs speak English, and increase positive attitudes towards NNE. However, it is not suggested that any variety is implemented by teachers. Instead, research that explores the needs of students and, of course, those that are most important to them is needed.

Years before the appearance of the expression, English as a Lingua Franca, the global meaning of English as a lingua franca, which is widely used by many individuals all over the world, was accepted (ELF). From the paradigms of second language learning (SLA), English as a foreign language (EFL) and World English, English as a lingua franca (ELF) emerged as researchers started to drift away from idealizing the native speaker and shifting their viewpoint towards viewing lingua franca speakers as fully-fledged users of the language, not learners or inept speakers of foreign languages. This marked a critical paradigm shift; ELF was now seen as a socially constructed function-related practice rather than a socially constructed practice (Seidlhofer, 2011).

To this end, Seidlhofer (2001) argues that lingua franca is an additionally acquired language system that serves as a means of communication between speakers of different first languages or a language by which members of different speech groups can communicate with each other, but which is not either a natural language-a language without native speakers. Many of today's lingua franca researchers would probably agree that any normal encounters between intercultural speakers from different language backgrounds would be valid for lingua franca research even if native speakers were present. Alptekin (2011) suggests that because of the disparity in cognitive processes, the language knowledge of a native speaker and ELF user is different, and thus, NNSs understand each other better than NSs understand NNSs. According to Ullman (2015), when learning and using grammar, L2 users rely on declarative memory systems rather than procedural memory systems. Procedural memory mechanisms are linked to processes of acquisition of L1 such as the regulation of syntax, syntactic, morphological and phonological regularities that are implicitly acquired without paying attention or putting an effort into them.

1.1. The Study

In the light of the literature review presented in the previous section, this study aims to investigate the awareness of ELF among College of Education tutors in the Ashanti Region of Ghana. In doing so, the study examines what tutors of English in Colleges of Education in the Ashanti Region know about ELF and how the tutors' awareness of ELF informs their teaching practice.

Specifically speaking, the study aims to answer the following research questions:

- What do tutors of English in Colleges of Education in the Ashanti Region know about ELF?
- How do the tutors' awareness of ELF inform their teaching practice?

2. Methodology

2.1. Participants

Forty-eight English tutors (31 female, 17 male) participated in the study. All of the participating tutors were tutors in the English language from Agogo Presbyterian College of Education, Agona SDA College of Education, Akrokerri College of Education, Mampong Technical College of Education, Offinso College of Education, Wesley College of Education, St. Monica's College of Education, St. Louis College of Education, and Christ the Teacher College of Education. Findings of the background questionnaire indicated that twenty-five tutors had taught for over ten (10) years while fifteen had taught for between 5 and 10 years and eight had been teaching for less than five years.

2.2. Data Collection

Data was collected from respondents using a questionnaire. The questionnaire had a number of statements that elicited information on demographic information and variables that determined participants' ELF Awareness.

The questionnaire comprises two parts. Items in the first part tap the knowledge of tutors on ELF and tutors' belief regarding ownership and use of English. Items in the second part, tap tutors' awareness of ELF and whether it informs their teaching practice. For the intelligibility and reliability concerns, the questions were checked by three experts in the field. The reliability of the questionnaire was measured after a pilot study with 10 English tutors, 5 of the participants of the pilot study and two experts in the field were interviewed to learn their ideas about the intelligibility of the items in this section. As a result of reliability measurement, the overall Cronbach's alpha result was found to be .86 which is high enough to administer the questionnaire. After the administration of the questionnaire, the overall reliability was calculated again and found to be .79.

2.3. Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) was used for the analysis of the questionnaire data. The means and standard deviations were deemed to be appropriate because the import of the research was to weigh the views of the participants. According to Michael (2013), the standard deviation is used in conjunction with the mean to summarize continuous data, not categorical data. In addition, the standard deviation, like the mean, is appropriate when the continuous data are not significantly skewed or has outliers.

3. Results and Discussion

This study sought to investigate the awareness of ELF among College of Education tutors in the Ashanti Region of Ghana.

Statement	Means	Std. Dev
The English language belongs to its native speakers (Americans/British).	2.87	.80
Users of the language own the language.	2.68	.81
Owners of the language (English) decide about changes in grammar	2.61	.81
Owners of the language decide about changes in vocabulary	2.39	.99
I prescribe a particular variety of English for my learners	2.31	.93

Table 1: Tutors Knowledge about ELF

Source: Field Survey, (2020)

Table 1 revealed that tutors should have knowledge about ELF. This is evident by the total mean score of 2.04 (SD = .87) which falls within the grading system (2–2.99 = Mild Knowledgeable). Most of the statements that pointed to knowledge about ELF had mean scores between 2.31 and 2.87 which indicates a mild response. Participant hat users of the language own the language (M = 2.6, SD = .81); the English language belongs to its native speakers ((M = 2.87, SD = .80). Again, participants' prescription of a particular variety of English for learners had a mean score of 2.31 which also indicates a mild knowledge of ELF. The teacher defines what ELF is and what features it comprises. The aim is to raise learner's ELF awareness. In most ELF setting strictly abiding by the NS norms, it would be difficult to introduce the ELF construct openly and straightforwardly in the classes as it is likely to be disconcerting or even annoying for the learners. In these, implementing implicit ways would give the teacher a sense of security. The implicit approach would also work better in contexts targeting preparation for high-stakes exams since the learners would be forced to study the language to pass a text and their focus would be on the exam skill and strategies (Elif&Bayyurt, 2019).

Statement	Means	Std. Dev
English is used to communicate with people of different	2.87	.80
English is used for higher Education.	2.68	.81
English is the language of the internet	3.21	.65
English is the language of international trade	3.14	.71
English is used to communicate with people of different L1 backgrounds	3.13	.67
English is not just a school subject but a tool for communication	3.04	.68
English connects people to the rest of the world	3.28	.64

Table 2: Tutors Perception on the Global Role of English

Source: Field Survey, (2020)

Data in Table 2 supports the assumption that English plays many roles in their daily activities both in and outside the classroom. The statistical data provided shows that participants agree entirely to the various statements on the global role of English since the various statements rated had mean scores between 2.68 to 3.28. Moreover, the total mean score computed is 2.59 (SD = .71). This fell within the score band 2.6 – 3.3 and it is interpreted as moderately knowledgeable. This implies that tutors of English in the colleges of education were moderately knowledgeable on the global role of English. The results also revealed that the respondents were moderately knowledgeable on all the items on the theme. The mean value per the grading system indicates that the role of role of English permeates every aspect of life. Participants agree that English is used to communicate with people of different L1 backgrounds (M = 3.13, SD = .67). In addition, statements such as 'English is used for higher Education' (M = 2.68, SD = .81), 'English is used to communicate with people of different' (M = 2.87, SD = .80), 'English connects people to the rest of the world' (M = 3.28, SD = .64), 'English is not just a school subject but a tool for communication' (M = 3.04, SD = .68) go a long way to proving that English is a global language. This can be interpreted that the role of English language in education has been perceived and categorized in numerous aspects in relation to skills, attitudes, awareness and knowledge.

Statement	Means	Std. Dev
I correct students' structural errors all the time	3.23	.61
I correct students' pronunciation errors.	3.21	.63
I ensure that my students speak English correctly	3.20	.59
Since I teach English I should use a British or American accent	3.19	.57
I am satisfied with my own accent	3.17	.68
Intelligibility is a crucial aspect in the English language classroom	3.41	.64
I boost learners' self confidence	3.36	.58
I motivate my learners to learn English	3.34	.61

Table 3: Tutors Attitude towards Students' Errors

Source: Field Survey, (2020)

Participants stated that learning through certain type of mistakes is more effective than being told directly, which was proved for both, the young and the older learners. This is evident in the data presented in Table 3. Out of a total of 48 participants who responded, 48.7% agree to the view that intelligibility is a crucial aspect in the English language classroom. The mean score for the statement is 3.41 (SD = .64) indicating a positive response. Intelligibility here means a basic recognition of words and utterances in the speech flow, comprehensibility which is the meaning of these words in their context, and interpretability which stands for understanding of speaker's intentions. This confirms the assertion of Sweet who posits that intelligibility as a guiding principle in the teaching of pronunciation, which, for him, was foundational in L2 learning. The main aim of ELF is international intelligibility. As Gray and Wise (1959, p.10) put it, 'if we speak to someone who gives no evidence of having heard, the act of communication has not been completed; we must have knowledge that he has heard and responded in some way'. The fact that the NNSs outnumbered NSs leads to a certain change in understanding of the English language and its role in today's world.

Again, the data in the Table shows that students' structural errors is corrected all the time. The mean score calculated for the statement is 3.23 (SD = .61) indicating a positive response although it falls under the moderate knowledgeable scale. In addition to teacher attributes, error correction is another constant factor in the classroom. Teachers always consider whether a particular error is necessary or unnecessary to correct, a decision partly based on whether it is relevant to the lesson or form on which the class is focused.

Statement	Means	Std. Dev	rank
I prepare my lessons with my learners needs in mind	3.25	.85	3rd
I am used to my habitual pattern of teaching	3.21	.79	6th
I make my feedbacks more relevant to the constraints of the different communicative situations that arise with each different activity	3.23	.76	4th
My teaching is native speaker oriented	3.11	.62	8th
I design my own activities to suit my learners and context	3.35	.80	1st
I experiment more that seem entirely novel and unwelcome to me and my learners	3.28	.90	2nd
I widen my scope and knowledge with new development in ELT	3.12	1.00	7th
I see my engagement with new trends in teaching as a springboard for professional growth	3.22	.93	5th

Table 4: Tutors Perception of ELF Pedagogies

Source: Field Survey, (2020)

In terms of tutors' perception on ELF pedagogies, it was revealed that 'I design my own activities to suit my learners and context' ($M = 3.35$, $SD = .80$) was their surest way to improve ELF pedagogies. This was followed by 'I experiment more that seem entirely novel and unwelcome to me and my learners' ($M = 3.28$, $SD = .90$).

Statement	Means	Std. Dev	rank
I use locally developed instructional materials	2.68	.94	3rd
I am used to commercially available courseware	2.23	.95	5th
I design my own instructional materials to suit my learners and my context	2.86	.94	2nd
Learners learn better when local courseware is used	2.40	.86	4th
I teach better with local courseware	2.91	.81	1st

Table 5: Tutors Perception of Instructional Materials

Source: Field Survey, (2020)

The data in Table 5 presents participants' responses to the statements which include 'I use locally developed instructional materials'; 'I am used to commercially available courseware'; 'I design my own instructional materials to suit my learners and my context'; 'Learners learn better when local courseware is used'; and 'I teach better with local courseware'. For I use locally developed instructional materials, participants indicated that it is not a major contributor to what pertains in ELF with a mean score of 2.68 and a rank score of 3rd. Participants also indicated that they design their own instructional materials to suit their learners with a mean score of 2.86. As it is seen in the Table, the tutors know that instructional materials contribute to ELF in their teachings.

4. Discussions

The findings revealed very minor variations between the findings, which seem to support the fact that ELF users use different communicative techniques in their statements. However, what can be noted is that certain preferences are slightly less favoured by ELF users. It seems that strategies that involve language content manipulation and language type adjustment to achieve communication objectives (transformations, paraphrases and coining new words) are less commonly used, while those that are more constrained, namely the use of alternatives that are still within the confines of a given language and do not require adjustments in the forms or structure which is more commonly observed. What can also be noticed is that avoidance tactics are also widely used by the study participants. The present case study yields a slightly different result, contrary to the findings made by Pitzl (2005) that ELF users display high levels of engagement and cooperation in a communicative exchange, and also to what Mauranen (2006) reported in the study on pro-active actions. ELF consumers just as often use prevention techniques as reimbursement ones. The speed of delivery of the message, intelligible accent, or complicated vocabulary were enlisted as among the most common problems. It seems that it is not necessary for students to be trained to communicate in English as a foreign language to prepare them to cope with the volatile existence of ELF communicative exchanges. Preparing students for one type of pronunciation leads to a situation in which it is more difficult to grasp other foreign models. Not enough communicative practice leads to fluency issues. And a fluency problem, in turn, leads to an increased use of avoidance strategies. In this study, I wanted to see to what extent English language tutors were aware of ELF in their English language classrooms. The findings suggest that there is a disconnection between what teachers believe, how they perceive the ELF construct and their teaching practices as revealed in previous studies (Bayyurt & Sifakis, 2015a, 2015b). The findings indicated that participant tutors' awareness of the need to communicate in English was not restricted to native speaker communities. They also agreed that intercultural awareness was important for language users. These findings could be interpreted as the changing conceptualizations of English language and pedagogy among language tutors in various contexts. Nevertheless, their tendency to see the native speaker as a yardstick and the importance they attach to linguistic accuracy perhaps show that

a traditional EFL perspective is still preferred by English language teachers (Illés&Csizér, 2015). However, how these tendencies relate to English language tutors' awareness of ELF depend on their local contexts.

In different contexts, teachers may have different conceptualizations of ELF, and there can be a number of factors influencing their English language teaching practice, such as, the presence of immigrants in their classrooms, linguistic and cultural differences between the immigrants and locals, attitudes of local students towards immigrants. Previous studies have documented that although tutors seem to welcome the idea of an ELF approach in their teaching practice, teachers do not know how to implement an ELF-aware approach to their language teaching materials since such materials hardly exist in the field (Bayyurt&Sifakis, 2015a, 2015b; Kemaloğlu-Er&Bayyurt, 2018; Sifakis&Bayyurt, 2018). The results of the current study showed that tutors favour the idea that cultural diversity should be integrated into the English language teaching materials. In other words, they supported the idea that the cultures of both native speakers and nonnative speakers should be part of the English language classrooms (Bayyurt, 2006, 2017).

However, a great majority of the tutors in this study seem to be indecisive about the role of the inclusion of the non-standard varieties of English in their language teaching practice. In addition, the teachers, who participated in the study, had differing views on the role of grammatical accuracy in successful communication. While some of them agreed to the idea, others were not sure about what the role of grammatical accuracy is in successful communication (Bayyurt&Sifakis, 2015a, 2015b). Moreover, they did not show a clear tendency towards supporting the idea that nonnative teachers should have a native-like competence-accent or native-like proficiency.

On the whole, my findings show that including WE, ELF and their pedagogical implications in teacher education can certainly contribute to modifying trainee teachers' views of the current reality of English, and above all encourage them to move towards a broader perspective in didactic terms. As for the participants, dealing with WE and ELF issues represented for the participants in the study 'an opportunity to receive new information about fascinating issues concerning the English language and a springboard for growing professionally as reflective tutors.' In line with other research studies in different contexts (Bayyurt&Sifakis, 2015a, 2015b; Sifakis&Bayyurt, 2015; Vettorel, 2015), our findings show that, once informed, teachers do acknowledge the importance of dealing with topics related to the current developments of English and their pedagogic implications.

Fostering awareness of the current diversification of English in teacher education can thus set the basis for acknowledging that WE and ELF can no longer be ignored in class: Rather than one single) variety (standard British English) or NS reference model, students should be presented with exemplifications of different accents, lingua-cultural varieties and contexts of use, going beyond static and monolithic representations of the language, as is still largely the case in ELT. In Kramsch's (2014) words, the purpose is not to abandon all standards pedagogic norms of language use as the goals of instruction. It is, rather, to strive to make our students into multilingual individuals, sensitive to linguistic, cultural and, above all, semiotic diversity, and willing to engage with difference, that is, to grapple with differences in social, cultural, political and religious worldviews.

5. Conclusion

Based on the finding of the study and subsequent discussions, the major conclusion is that, tutors are mildly knowledgeable as far as ELF awareness was concerned. Furthermore, tutors of English Language in colleges of education should be made aware of the multifaceted reality of the English Language today.

6. Pedagogical Implications

Based on the findings from the study, some pedagogical implications are drawn. English tutors should avail themselves for in-service trainings, workshops and seminars to abreast themselves with appropriate instructional methodologies for effective teaching. The Ministry of Education, through the Ghana Universities Council, mentoring universities and Colleges of Education should provide stimulus packages for teachers to acquire and develop effective teaching and learning materials for their lessons. Tutors should endear themselves to reading various write-ups and conversations of students to help them identify the errors they make and correct them. The government and its supporting agents such as T-tel must involve tutors in ways they can develop and implement effective assessment techniques in their teaching and learning activities. Tutors should seek ways of acquiring attitudes that can help them create congenial atmosphere for teaching and learning as/ this is needed by students to understand what their teachers teach them. Tutors of English should ensure that classroom materials reflect the purpose for which English is learned. They should ensure that their teaching approach is geared towards motivating to be confident ELF speakers. Finally, they should create an atmosphere that will accommodate all learners irrespective of their L1 backgrounds.

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