

Perceptions of English Language Students on the Relevance of ‘EFL’, ‘ESL’ and Other Such Terms in Contemporary Turkish Contexts

Chinaza Ironsi

Near East University, North Nicosia, Northern Cyprus. Turkey
solomon.chinaza@neu.edu.tr

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received : 2021-03-11

Revised : 2021-04-14

Accepted : 2021-08-09

KEYWORDS

*English as an International and
Intranational Language*

Non-native speaker

English as a foreign language

English as a second language

World Englishes

North Cyprus

ABSTRACT

Over the years, there has been an ongoing debate on the relevance of certain terms like ESL, EFL. Several linguists have argued that these terms do not represent a wide range of language users under varying circumstances, given their various proficient language competence levels. In a bid to unveil the extent to which this presupposition applies to the use of ESL and EFL terms. A group of 36 participants from a school in North Cyprus was purposively chosen for this quantitative study. Four research questions were to be investigated. Questionnaires were used to collect vital data from the participants on their perceptions on terms like ESL and EFL. After analysis, results were collected, analysed and used to make cases for redefining the concepts of ESL and EFL terms, especially within the Turkish-Cypriot setting. A notable finding of this study was that the participants believed that terms like EFL ESL do not adequately define their language status. They further suggested that more appropriate terms should be used. The study suggested using English as an international and intranational language instead of the former terms, among other suggestions. This study adds to the corpus of research showing that while acronyms like EFL and ESL are relevant in English language education, more emphasis should focus on improving learner's four language skills which directly impacts their performance and production of the target language.



1. Introduction

Over the years, the concepts of English as a foreign language and as a second language have been debated widely. According to Kachru (1985), the spread of language resulted in the classification of countries under such terms as EFL ESL and ENL. He explained that the spread of English gave rise to varieties of English that those regions speak though it is a variety and not a different language. Previously, many language users could be classified under these terms according to the manner and way they acquired the language, but in most cases, literature has argued that these terms do not define or categorise them properly (Mauranen, 2018; Kubota, 2018). The relevance of such terms regarding language teaching and learning continues to resurface in language literature as the debate increases. While the debate is ongoing on the usage and essence of these acronyms in the growing contemporary society, the call for a further critique of this issue arises in fast-growing English as foreign and second language countries. It is evident in studies that the categorisation of countries and individuals using such acronyms has not been thoroughly justified (Alogali, 2018; Bolton, 2018).

There is evidence in research to show that ESL and EFL countries have engaged in rigorous researches in the English language more than others in English as a native language country (Bolton, 2018; Kachru, 2019). Many believe that while EFL and ESL countries have recently produced numerous researches in language education, such societies have produced individuals with great linguistic and communicative competence in the English language (Bolton, 2019; Rezaei, Khosravizadeh & Mottaghi, 2019). Arguably, the categorisation of an individual in an ESL/EFL country with linguistic and communicative competence under such categories opens up the need to revisit this issue. Previous studies have continued to debate these issues as numerous authors and specialists appear never to see a need for them. With these terms and the descriptions, they allude to English language speakers and users, they feel it is time to look into the possibility of creating newer terms, which would more accurately reflect the present state of English language usage around the world, like in Turkish Cypriot communities (Crystal, 2004; Sharifian, 2009; Kirkpatrick, 2010). Importantly, it is critical to state that the English language is common in Turkey as much Turkish use it for various

purposes, especially for communication and everyday tasks. It is reported in the literature that more than 30 million people in Turkey speak English, and more than 60 million are still learning and acquiring the language (Coksun, 2011), which suggests that in the streets of Istanbul, Ankara, Nicosia, and Kyrenia, lots of people make use of the English language daily. Though many consider and categorise Turkey as an EFL country, the constitution recognises English as the second language (ESL) after the Turkish language. (Bahia, 2008). This is visible among a vast number of English speakers of Turkish origin in Turkey. However, many believe that time has come for such classification or categorisations to be redefined as they no longer represent the true language status of a society like Turkey. While a lot has been written about ESL and EFL ENL acronyms and how they apply in contemporary societies, numerous scholars are beginning to have a different opinion on this subject matter (Mauranen, 2018; Bolton, 2019).

Furthermore, Turkey has carried out numerous researches within language education with a growing populace of English speakers whose competence is near-native (Coksun, 2011); yet they are classified under the acronyms of ESL and EFL. As this topic resurfaces again, there is a need to reinvestigate the relevance of such terms in our contemporary society, especially within the Turkish-Cypriot context. It is evidenced in previous studies that scholars may perceive themselves as near-native or having communicative and linguistic competence, yet the definition of near nativeness is yet unclear (White & Genesee, 1996; Sorace, 2003).

It may seem that very limited scholars are concerned with these issues as it affects language learners, as very little study exists on the opinions of language learners on the usage of acronyms like ESL and EFL. Also, in recent times, it is obvious that numerous novel language related-researches carried out by notable authors within this context have emerged, yet a number of these authors are classified using such acronyms as mentioned above. Although this topic has been discussed in previous times without implementing authors' suggestions in research, continuous discussions on this topic may be considered a possible way of researching this topic to gain global attention. Moreover, although research has illuminated several inconsistencies with regards to the use of these acronyms, no study has to date re-examined this issue as it relates to this context. Despite decades of research on this topic and its relevance in language education, notable authors like Braj Kachru, Andy Kirkpatrick, David Crystal, to mention but a few, have constantly debated on this topic. It may seem relevant to hint that many authors have conducted numerous studies in the broader literature, yet this problem is still insufficiently addressed. Having stated these, we argue that previous research can only be considered a first step towards profoundly understanding researchers views on the inequalities and inconsistencies regarding the use of

such acronyms. At the same time, there is a need to investigate the learners' opinions concerning the use of such acronyms in describing their language status.

One way to sort this out is to investigate the perceptions of language learners within the Turkish context on their views on the usage of such acronyms in recent times.

1.1 Theoretical Framework

There have been two schools of thought concerning the true owners of the English language: the "idealist" and the "pragmatist" (Jenkins, 2006). It is based on these ways of thinking that ideas like ESL, ENL, and EIL emanates. The previous recommends that the ownership be ascribed to local speakers (ENL), while the last contends that English is never again exclusively claimed by the local speakers (EIL) even as the vast majority of its advocates are generally of ESL and EFL origin. As for their tolerance for the new varieties of English, the former treats them as deviations and suggests that speakers of the newer varieties should look to native speakers for the standard-setting and language pedagogy, yet it is thought as superfluous to see native speakers as models or the proprietors of English language. As Graddol (2006), one of the devotees to the idealist hypothesis, prior stated that, "the very truth that English is a universal language implies that no nation can have authority over it. He further stated that it is just global to the degree that it is not their Native speakers (NSs) language. Others possess it." What Graddol holds is the conviction that in communicating in English, there are no local speakers in light of English's special status in the contemporary world, and English is not in its purest form rather a variety or mix of other languages. This presupposes that terms like EFL and ESL should be redefined given these arguments, as mentioned earlier. Aside from Graddol's contention, there has been a thoughtful discussion on how ELT pedagogy should treat local or native speakers. Holliday (2005) contends that "competence" in communicating in English is never again controlled by birth, however by the ability to utilise the language appropriately. Crystal (2004) even recommends that we uproot "local or native speakers" with "ability", "association", and "legacy" in a bid to reinstate that language has shifted from where it was centuries ago to a global form.

However, the pragmatist theories and numerous other ELT experts give their backings to the Non-native speakers NNSs and award students in the Outer and Expanding Circles academic motivation to guarantee their ownership of language and thus justifying the use of terms like ESL and EFL (Qions, 2004; Matsuda, 2019; Berns, 2019; Bahia, 2008). Similarly, as Macias (2010) suggests, if English students cannot claim ownership of language, they probably would not see themselves as real speakers of that language. However, numerous NNSs, as noted by Holliday (2005), still lean toward a model of the

English variety related to NSs. They seem hesitant to claim nativeness to the language. She proposes that this hesitance could be identified with students' "decline in confidence" as non-native instructors and teachers are scared by the notion of the native speaker standard. These and many more are the debates that have sustained the use of concepts like ESL, EFL, and ENL to distinguish between varieties and speakers.

Aside from Macias's presumption of students' decline of confidence, another progressively confused explanation behind NNSs' reluctance to claim nativeness of English is found in Holliday's book (Holliday, 2005). The study breaks down the multifaceted nature of her email interviewee by suggesting that the native speaker notion is so profoundly established in the TESOL and that it is difficult to eradicate. Concepts like ESL and ENL could be revisited. If we consider Macias's view and let language learners remain where they are—emphasising that they do not have to wind their tongue in a twisted way that is consummately okay to keep your accents—eventually, we would frightfully annoy the students since it may be their wish to attain such desired pronunciation peak. So, these still open up these glaring cases for terms like ESL and EFL as used in most cases to classify learners and speakers. Besides, in Matsuda's (2003) study, she found that students in Japan learning English see English as a worldwide language that could be utilised universally; however, from Macias's supposition to Matsuda's discoveries, it may be inferred that the idea of nativeness may be certain issues to be considered on such topics that bother on ESL/ENL/EFL acronyms. This study hinges on these different schools of thought to suggest that though there have been calls for reviews on these acronyms as it concerns language users, numerous aspects of the debate need to be considered in resolving this issue of nativeness and non-nativeness of the English language, which is the sole aim of this study.

2. Literature Review

Considering Turkey as an EFL country, a recent newspaper report states that according to Article 3 of the Constitution of Turkey, Turkish and English are seen as the two official languages of the country though in 2012; the Ministry of Education added Kurdish to the academic program of the primary schools, other languages like Abkhaz, Adyghe, Standard Georgian, Laz, and others were added in 2013 and 2017 respectively. The Ministry of education decided to include Arabic in 2015 as language courses offered in colleges and Universities. Because all these languages are spoken in Turkey, English is the 3rd most spoken language in Turkey and second among Turkish – Cypriots. English is taught in school as an elective course though it is officially recognised as the second language after Turkish. It is taught in schools and used for international trade. It is glaring to see many Turkish citizens learning the language for trade and tourism.

Many tourist destinations are around and within some cities in Turkey and Turkish occupied Cyprus.

2.1 Concepts of ESL, EFL, and ENL

As Braj Kachru 1985, a teacher of linguistics, a cycle shows the spread of English. This cycle is shaped with three circles. It is reported in the literature that the inner circle is ENL, English as a native language, the outer circle, incorporates ESL, English as a second language, the expanding circle incorporates EFL, English as a foreign language (Mauranen, 2018; Kubota, 2018; Alogali, 2018). Previous and recent studies indicated that native language users like Britain, America are classified in ENL circles, regions colonised by the British like Asia and Africa are in the ESL circle (Kirkpatrick, 2012; Pennycook, 1994). So, we can say, as per Kachru's model, that Turkey takes place in the EFL circle, the expanding one because English is used only for education and tourism in Turkey and Turkish occupied Cyprus. In reality, language use regarding the English language is changing as the English language community and users keep growing from 17% in 2008 to 45% in 2018. (Sari & Yusuf, 2009). This change in dynamics in language use has given rise to the need for review or redefining the way some of the speakers are being classified using ESL/ EFL terms.

Macias (2010) thought that approach or policy, regardless of whether they express certainty or non-existent issues, influence the idea of language and the teaching and learning to a setting. Studies claim that second language acquisition classrooms are not secluded from outer political concern, and "what occurs in the classroom is personally connected to social and political powers" (Pennycook, 1994; Bolton, 2019). Consequently, Sifakis (2007) suggested that the worldwide spread of English and the expansion in English speakers directly impact the English language itself and the English language classrooms. From this ideological point of view, it has been recommended that English language learning and teaching have been ruled by the 'perfect local speaker' or ideal native speaker and at such the ongoing use of terms like EFL and ESL, which are used to create a category which connotes standards of approved varieties of English (Mauranen, 2018; Matsuda, 2019).

As it were, the NS has been held up as a benchmark for information and knowledge about language (Crystal, 2004; Mauranen, 2018; Kubota, 2018) and represents an ideal in language teaching and learning. Subsequently, the NS belief system has had a remarkable effect on the English language approach and policy as they view ENL as superiors, thus sustaining the use and ideologies behind the terms like ESL and EFL (Rezaei, Khosravizadeh & Mottaghi, 2019). Studies show that English has spread worldwide today, and there is no uncertainty that it is the most broadly instructed, read, and communicated language that the world has ever known (Kirkpatrick, 2012;

Matsuda, 2019). Given the various settings where it is utilised, literature shows that endeavours have been made to explain the worldwide scene, depict and characterise its users and uses, which ought to be carried out in the right context by clearly and logically considering a lot before assigning acronyms like EFL, ESL and ENL status to language users (Alogali, 2018; Bolton, 2018). Interest in this subject started with Kachru's (1992) model of three concentric circles of users of English as discussed in earlier paragraphs: The Inner, Outer and Expanding Circle. This model has brought issues to light about the multifaceted nature of the English language, especially among these varying classes of ENL ESL and EFL.

Besides, it shed light on the risky qualification or characteristics attached to native speakers (NS)/non-local speakers (NNS) of English, which has become an issue of worry among many applied linguists and English language educating (ELT) experts. The NS argument picked up more energy in the 1990s when the point at which the hidden political and ideological ramifications on the notions of NS were uncovered. Work by Kachru (1985) on the "native speaker misrepresentation" combined with the overall spread of English as an International Language (EIL) and other issues related to the use of terms like ESL, EFL, cultivated discourses about the status and the changing discourse on the ownership of language. In a word, the rise of another worldview of reference in English (see, for example, Sharifian, 2009) has tested the NS picture in many discussions about the idea of 'native speakers and, by suggestion, addressed English language strategy/policy and what ought to be educated and learned for the sake of English.

Given that English is utilised overall basically by non-native speakers (NNS) to speak with NNS, Kirkpatrick and Saunders (2005) posited that it appears to be reasonable to question whether all who learn it need to endeavour towards the NS competence and whether the NS competence ought to be set as the benchmark for classification. In some scenarios where the use of language as a second language has overtaken the native language, like in Singapore and Malaysia, what becomes the essence or relevance of such classifications like ESL, EFL, ENL(). Furthermore, English is instructed by NNS to NNS (Kachru; Nelson, 2001; Kachru, 2019); consequently, the importance of the NS perfect is generally questioned. It would, in this manner, appear that the worldwide spread of English has become a significant issue for both the instructors and students of English and with the expanded spread of English, native-like capability or competence is seen as an unreasonable standard for non-local speakers. Subsequently, it has been suggested that the teaching of English ought not to concentrate on NS standards, strategies, and culture, as is the case in most institutions (Crystal, 2004; Matsuda, 2019).

In any case, this thought has had little effect on the teaching and learning of English and in English as a foreign language (EFL) classroom, as the spotlight still will, in general, be on the perfect monolingual native speaker and a particular variety of English, namely; British English (BE) or American English (AE). From a practical perspective, Sari and Yusuf (2009) suggested that the customary spotlight on a native speaker variety does not cater to the requirements of the international English language community. Undoubtedly, today, the objective of language learning would be to negotiate diverse English varieties and not to imitate native speakers. They further opined that from a pedagogical perspective, questions had been expressed concerning whether a solitary NS variety encourages clarity in global settings and contributes towards intercultural interactions. It is well evidenced in a study that language learners often exhibit anxiety issues while trying to learn native speaker competencies, thus affecting their test scores (Ironsi, 2020a). Research has shown evidence of racial abuses among language instructors due to their non-native status, which in most cases do not define their teaching competence (Ironsi, 2020c).

Other studies though that the more varieties of language students are presented to, the higher their degree of comprehension, though the position of this assertion is yet to be established in practical terms (Qions, 2004; Alogali, 2018; Bolton, 2018). From this, Sharifian (2009) suggested that it would follow that there is no need to reevaluate the concurrent English language worldview and hold onto EIL to view ESL and EFL in the appropriate viewpoint instead of misconstruing concepts and ascribing nativeness and non-nativeness in a manner that does not define the users. Consequently, ELT should focus on joining EIL uses of English regarding non-native speakers worldwide regardless of whether they are interacting with other native or non-natives. Studies have acknowledged that the focus should be to design and implement effective strategies, approaches, and teaching methods to ensure the successful online or face-to-face teaching of four language skills (Ironsi, 2020a).

In light of the dialogues above, other notable authors still consider it reasonable to question why in language pedagogy, despite the developing research in the EIL worldview, there are still spotlights on native-speaker English (Kirkpatrick, 2010). In the first place, the very idea of EIL and the numerous names used to indicate the realisation of English(es) on the planet appears to cause some perplexity. For instance, Matsuda et al. (2010) bring up that EIL may infer an arranged and unitary assortment called International English, which it is not. Sharifian (2009) likewise makes a characterisation on International English which may recommend a specific assortment or variety of English, and EIL, which does not allude to a specific variety. Kachru (1985) clarifies this characterisation by

expressing that English as an International Language is spread and not disseminated; henceforth, it is diversely completed in different settings. Nevertheless, others believe that the new post-regional Englishes is a delusion made in ad hoc circumstances, and therefore cannot be systematised (James, 2008; Kubota, 2018; Alogali, 2018).

In Turkish Cypriot classrooms, international tests are utilised to set the benchmark for English in language courses. The Ministry of National Education in Turkey also stated that the fundamental reference instrument created by the Council of Europe in 2001, The Common European Framework for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment, sets gauges concerning the native speakers. Lastly, in the educational program, the public spotlight on British and American culture and writing emphasises the significance of the two varieties and the sustenance of terms like ESL and EFL in such social orders, even though NNS are accomplishing more as far as research and publication in the pedagogy of language teaching/learning is concerned (Kirkpatrick, 2010). This is viewed as unsuitable as Mehmet (2014) suggested that many schools in TRNC are beginning to organise their locally recognised University language assessment instead of TESOL, TOE FL, and others.

Holliday (2005) believed that the term ESL (or EFL) likewise has hints of the social prevalence of societal superiority, with BE and AE speakers as judges of what seems to be "right" in English-language utilisation. This is particularly so in "ESL and EFL nations, for example, Singapore, India, the Philippines, Nigeria, Kenya, and so forth., which have advanced their very own image of English. He suggested that it is worthy of note that parts of non-native English are gradually being characterised and that non-native standards are gradually picking up more recognition. As anyone might expect, the aim of a typical Turkish Cypriot is not to talk like a local speaker of English yet to talk and use the informed assortment or variety of Turkish English. To talk like a local speaker would mean a loss of compatibility and distinguishing identity from one's compatriots.

In my view, we should, at that point, maybe replace such "dangerous" abbreviations as ESL and EFL. This is in line with the assertion of Kirkpatrick (2007), who opined that the myth of the "native speaker" as the main substantial and dependable wellspring of language information ought to be dropped since a great part of the world's verbal communication happens by methods for languages that are not the users "native language" yet their second, third language. He believed that it is also a reality that there are presently more non-native than local speakers of English. We need a world perspective on English, which perceives that it never has a place solely with its native speakers. (Bahia, 2004; Mauranen, 2018; Kubota, 2018)

There have been cases where non-native speakers acquire language due to immigration become more proficient yet considered non-native speakers (NNS). Previous studies have argued that there is a need for clarification on these terms as it does not fully represent some of the language users who are still considered as non-native since language acquisition was through learning or as a result of immigration (Macias, 2010; Tahmasbi, Hashemifardnia & Namaziandost, 2019; Matsuda, 2019). Another study reports that most of these language users who have acquired great competence in a foreign language are in most cases considered as near natives, which yet does not represent them in any manner (Brulhiaux, 2010; Matsuda, 2019). It is well documented in studies that there are cases of language users who are very proficient in language use, who understand the language from a holistic point of view- having a clear understanding of both communicative and sociolinguistic aspects of language are still classified under these acronyms (Crystal, 2004; Bahia, 2008; Berns, 2019), they emphasised that most of these language users are academic doctors and professors who understand the language even more than the users, yet are considered as non-native and thus classified under such terms.

While the categorisation may be worthwhile, the diversities among native speakers should be examined critically. Sharifian (2009) states that a variety of a particular language is best described as a variety form. She believed that no language in the world ever existed on its own without being derived from other varieties. Others argued that even as British English (BE) is considered as a native, yet it would be true to consider it as a variant form in the real sense, with regards to its origin from the Anglo-Saxons and Norman (Macias, 2010; Mauranen, 2018). This is also applicable to American English (AE) as they are not exiting in their purest form to be considered native. These arguments suggest that there are clear indications that some of these terms like ESL and EFL should be fading away, given these aforementioned debates that have been ongoing for decades.

On the other hand, Skutnabb-Kangas (2001) suggested that the globalisation of English or English as an international language has become why these terms are still relevant, especially among the ENL countries. Other studies posit that excessive power and control have been ascribed to ENL and at such a reason for the continuity in the usage of such terms like ESL and EFL, making them linguistics dictators of our time. This explains why a supposed native of a particular language is still considered native when he/she has lost the linguistic and communicative competence of his native language. Kirkpatrick (2007) made these glaring arguments when he suggested that the time has come for these concepts to diminish their usage as many of them no longer describe language users appropriately. Though he was writing in general terms

and not with regards to the Turkish Cypriot situation, imagine a Turkish Cypriot who was born, bred in Turkey and has acquired the Turkish language, and afterwards travelled to the United Kingdom and lived for years, thus acquiring British English (and in most cases, speaks like native English man), the concepts of ESL and EFL makes it difficult to classify these language users under a particular group. Much more, acknowledging that this language user has forgotten his native Turkish language makes it difficult to put him under the ENL classification.

However, whether they use it as a first, native, second, or foreign language, people tend to adjust their English when talking to someone for whom English is not the first language, yet speaking the language in a manner to express themselves (Rezaei, Khosravizadeh & Mottaghi, 2019). Sharifian and Kirkpatrick (2011) opined that language is best described as a variety of another and at such if it is American English, British English, Nigerian English, Singaporean English, or Turkish English; all of these are best seen as a variety of others after all the ENL countries cannot claim that their respective languages are in their purest form, so why the classifications under ESL and ENL? Are these concepts politically motivated? What is their relevance in contemporary societies like Turkey, Northern Cyprus, Singapore, and other fast-growing English-speaking countries? While linguists and scholars in the field of language teaching have written less on this topic, especially within Turkey and Northern Cyprus, there is a need to revisit these issues as the number of English language learners is rapidly increasing. The way they perceive themselves could have considerable input on their motivation to learn the language. These and many are the core points of this article that intend to examine and elicit pre-service teachers' perceptions of such acronyms like ESL and EFL in the contemporary Turkish and Turkish Cypriot society.

In light of the discussions on English language, ideology, and language policy, it seemed desirable to carry out a small-scale attitudinal and perception-based study concerning EFL pre-service teachers' perceptions towards the English language and such terms as EFL and ESL. This study foresees that attitudes of prospective teachers towards English are particularly important because they: a) reflect the convictions and qualities that are predominant in a specific setting, b) give experiences into future EFL practice and instruction approach, c) impact the decision of variety as a language model, d) reflect language philosophy which will help unveil if there is still any need to attach speakers and countries with English statuses when the statutes do not define them any longer. Considering these, the study decided to investigate the following questions, they are;

- a) What is the level of relevance of ESL/EFL terms to students?
- b) Do these terms define the variety of English they speak?

- c) What is the importance of English varieties to learners?
- d) What should a variety of English be taught and learned?

3. Method

3.1 Research Design

Babble (2010) defined quantitative research as a systematic investigation of phenomena that involves gathering quantifiable data and performing statistical, mathematical, or computational techniques. This study was carried out through a quantitative research design by using questionnaires for data collection. This design is fit for this study as it will assist in obtaining scientific statistic data and information on the opinions of the pre-service teacher on the use of terms like ESL and EFL.

3.2 Participants

The participants for this study were pre-service teachers enrolled in an English language primary classroom in a private university in North Cyprus. The participants comprised 36 EFL Turkish/Turkish-Cypriot pre-service teachers. A purposive sampling method was used to choose the participants of the study. They gave their consent to participate in the study to give their opinions on the relevance of such terms as ESL and EFL.

3.3 Data Collection and Instrumentation

To be able to answer the research questions posed earlier, a questionnaire was distributed to the participants. The questionnaire comprises (a) statements ranked on a Likert scale 1-4 to answer research questions 1 and 3); b) a set of Y / N questions to answer research question 2; and finally, c) a few open-ended questions to answer research question 4. The questionnaire consisted of 20 items adapted from Phyllis (1987), which were modified, face, and construct validated by two experts in language education to ensure that the items meet the study's requirements and ensure that the format and structure are well designed. The questionnaire was piloted with 20 students, and a Cronbach alpha index of 0.92 was obtained, confirming its ability to measure what it purports to measure.

3.4 Data Analysis

The questionnaire was analysed by a statistical package for social sciences (SPSS IBM) program version 23. A descriptive analysis comprising the mean scores, standard deviations, and frequency distributions was used to interpret the questionnaire data.

4. Findings

RQ 1: What is the level of relevance of ESL EFL terms to students

Table 4.1 Mean responses of participants on the level of relevance of ESL and EFL terms to them

| Items | N | Mean | SD |
|--|----|------|------|
| ESL and EFL is very relevant in language teaching and learning | 36 | 2.11 | 1.16 |
| ESL and EFL is slightly relevant in language teaching and learning | 36 | 2.02 | 1.03 |
| ESL and EFL is relevant in language teaching and learning | 36 | 2.00 | 1.00 |
| ESL and EFL is not relevant in language teaching and learning | 36 | 3.93 | 3.68 |

Table 4.1 presents the mean responses of participants of the relevance of the terms ESL and EFL. The table shows that a mean score of 2.11, 2.02, 2.00 was obtained, which was below the cut off average of 3.00, which indicates that some of the students thought that these terms are still relevant in language teaching and learning. The results also obtained a mean score of

3.93, indicating that most participants thought these terms were irrelevant to language teaching and learning.

RQ 2: Do ESL and EFL terms define the variety of English they speak?

Table 4.2 Frequency distribution of participants' opinion on research question 2

| Items | Yes % | No % |
|--|-------|------|
| Does ESL define the English you speak? | 12% | 82% |
| Does EFL define the English you speak? | 25% | 75% |

Table 4.2 presented participants' opinions when asked to indicate if acronyms like ESL and EFL define the English they speak. The table further presents the percentage of participants who made known their opinions on using these terms. The table above indicates that 12% and 25% of the participants agreed

that terms like ESL and EFL define the language they speak, whereas 82% and 75% of the participants believed that these terms do not define their English.

RQ 3: What is the importance of English varieties to learners

Table 4.3 Mean responses of participants on the importance they attach to English varieties

| Items | N | Mean | SD |
|---|----|------|------|
| English variety is very important to learners | 36 | 2.66 | 1.61 |
| English variety is slightly important to learners | 36 | 2.17 | 1.28 |
| English variety is important to learners | 36 | 3.01 | 2.98 |
| English variety is not important to learners | 36 | 3.75 | 3.43 |

The result above presents the participant's viewpoints regarding the importance they place on English language varieties. The result unveils that when participants were asked to indicate how important English varieties are to them, an average mean response of 2.66, 2.17, 3.01, and 3.75 was obtained, indicating that participants somewhat think

English varieties are still important to them. It is still pertinent to note that many participants thought that English variety was not important to them as a mean score of 3.75 was obtained, which indicates so.

RQ 4: What variety of English should be taught and learned?

Table 4.4 Mean responses of participants on the variety of English that should be taught and learned in SLA classrooms

| Items | MMean | SDSSD |
|---|-------|-------|
| American English should be taught and learned | 2.04 | 1.46 |
| British English should be taught and learned | 2.56 | 1.92 |
| World English should be taught and learned | 3.45 | 3.02 |

Results from table 4.4 indicated that when participants were asked which variety should be taught in the classroom, AE obtained a mean response of 2.04, BE obtained a mean score of 2.56, which was below the cut-off of 3.00. However, WE (world English) obtained a cut-off of 3.45, which indicated that the participants thought that World English should be taught and learned in SLA classrooms.

4. Discussion

From the short review and the result above, these key findings emerged; the present study confirms that although some students perceive these acronyms as relevant other think otherwise. At least our findings hint that while it is widely debated that such acronyms do not represent a large number of language users recently, the negligence of these conclusions to an extent makes these acronyms relevant in today's language literature. This is in tandem with the assertions of similar studies, which opine that these terms still have some relevance in some language teaching context and are used in distinguishing a speaker from another (Sari & Yusuf, 2009; MaAdditionally8; Kubota, 2018). Additionally, comparing our results with a similar study, it may seem that our results further align with the discoveries of studies that uncovered that these terms are still indirectly useful to language learners as some still assume that varieties of English language define a speaker to a large extent (Macais, 2010; Bolton, 2018; Kachru, 2019).

Furthermore, it may seem that further validation of instructors' decisions in choosing what to teach, for example, in language policy decisions, what to teach in respect with varieties, may not be indicated in clear terms to the language instructor. However, most language instructors accept teaching a particular variety of English that they conform to and accept. Knowingly or not, these instructors use these terms directly and indirectly during language lessons, thus suggesting that these terms, in a way, are still in use and somewhat of relevance to language teaching. Though we speculate that regardless of the relevance of these terms in recent times, and as our result has shown, there may be a possibility of change when these terms are redefined and generally accepted by linguists worldwide. Another promising finding was that there was a notion that such acronyms do not define some

language users, which is directly tied with the view of some authors in language literature which affirm that that time has come for such terms to be redefined or completely erased to address language speaker and user appropriately as they represent (Kirkpatrick, 2010; David, 2014; Rezaei, Khosravizadeh & Mottaghi, 2019). Frankly, these authors have argued that these terms are no longer adequately representing most speakers who fall under this classification, especially the near natives, supposed ESL and EFL language teachers, academic doctors, and professors of NNEST origin who have a good knowledge of the language both in communication and linguistic perspectives.

However, we acknowledge that researchers have considerable discussions on the relevance of such acronyms, yet their arguments have not been given appropriate consideration. We speculate that this might be due to the politics of language dominance, making the English language an international language and a language of trade, politics, entertainment, and even scholarly research. Nonetheless, we believe that it is well justified in this study that although there could be relevance attached to these acronyms, scholars recognise that they may no longer be relevant in their context as they do not represent their language status. This is largely seen in the study as a further novel finding that these acronyms do not represent the variety of languages they speak. This is an important finding in the understanding that though such acronyms have dominated the language learning space for a long time, most language users and learners do not agree that such acronyms define their language of use.

The experiment results found clear support for the assertion of previous studies of Kirkpatrick (2010), which reveals a need for these terms to be erased or redefined as they no longer represent or define its speakers across the world. A similar pattern of results was obtained in the study of Crystal (2014), who believed that lots of language users do feel that these terms are no longer needed in language teaching on the basis that they seem racist and also, they do not cover a wide range of very competent users globally. However, in line with Kirkpatrick's (2010) and Coksun (2010) ideas, who demand a complete change of these terms, as we have argued elsewhere, these terms may no longer be relevant in language literature.

Together, the present findings confirm that these acronyms do not represent a wide range of global users. Our results demonstrate two facts. First, it is clear that some language users still place some relevance to these acronyms, which may be alluded to its dominance over the years. Secondly, it was obvious that language users have clearly shown that such acronyms no longer represent them or their language status and thus should be abolished in language literature. Though the applicability of these new results is largely dependent on scholars' consensus on this, the result has revealed that our results are consistent with research showing that such terms should be redesigned to fit the present realities of language users globally, which have changed over the years. Our results also provide evidence to show the preference for world English rather than American or British English. Notable authors in broader language literature have recognised the need for a re-focus on world English or English as an international language which would invariably erase English as a second or foreign language (Kirkpatrick, 2010; Coksun, 2010; Crystal, 2014). These results go beyond previous reports to show that while American and British varieties of English have been popularised in our educational institutes, language learners prefer teaching and learning of world English against other varieties.

Though it may seem difficult to make some valid conclusions, it may seem that some of the participants may view this topic of little relevance to the entire language learning process. Nonetheless, it may be extremely intriguing to see that in the initial piece of the examination, some of the participants recognise the relevance of varieties yet express their 'normal' support for learning varieties of English, although some objected to the use of such acronyms in language teaching and learning. We speculate that their response may be a viewpoint suggesting that be it ESF or EFL, acquisition of language skills or language performance and production is largely independent of these arguments. Rational as it may seem, researchers in broader literature have recognised this debate among scholars, which makes it an important issue to discuss in research much more when supposedly NNEST are making notably novel researches that contribute to the pedagogy of language teaching and learning, there is a need to revisit this issues from the angle of the learners.

6. Conclusion

When questions about the relevance of the terms ESL and EFL, the pre-service teachers believed that these terms should be erased as there are still many arguments on this issue. Given this, the study argued that while these terms are still in use, they should be redefined with better terms to describe language users as such. More so, it can be deduced that if the language is for communication and both native and non-native speakers have attained equilibrium in the use of language for communication- where what is being communicated is intended, then terms like such do not

have much essence among both NNS and NSs. The study also summarised that the varieties of which language learners speak do not describe the groupings upon which they are classified. This conclusion is made on the standpoint that in ESL/EFL countries, some or most language users who have native or near-native competence cannot be described by these terms like ESL or EFL. The study deemed it unfitting to make such descriptions as the language users with both linguist and communicative competence like the NS, and in some cases where the language used is an academic professional in the field of language, knowing the depths and heights of the language, makes it difficult to ascribe such terms to these categories of language users of NNS origin. Equally, the study emphasised that such terms should be redefined as most language users who have issues of accents and pronunciations see themselves as poor victims of this classification, which in most cases, reduces the zeal for language learning. The study also stated that varieties of English are of less importance to pre-service teachers as they aim towards achieving communicative competence regardless of the variety of accents they use. The study summarised that EIIL should be a better acronym if ESL and EFL cannot be redefined or completely erased. More language users of supposedly ESL and EFL origin see themselves as international and global language users.

They reviewed both the theoretical issues underpinning our study and the results of our investigation on the opinions of pre-service teachers on such terms as ESL and EFL. The position of this study is so clear in line with the varying arguments that these terms and acronyms may need to be redefined or completely erased to accommodate language users who see such terms as mere acronyms and not a description of who they are language users. This will mend the notion of most language users on issues of NS and NNS and assist in creating a conducive linguistic atmosphere for foreigners willing to learn English. This will also enhance language teaching/ learning among pre-service teachers in the Turkish Cypriot setting. The problem seems never to have been more diversified. Maybe the hope in its answer also has a multifaceted nature: various perspectives and voices from nearby settings are fundamental for gaining insights into points of view on the multifaceted English language concerning the relevance of those terms (ESL, EFL) discussed.

References

- Alogali, A. (2018). World Englishes: Changing the paradigm of linguistic diversity in global academia. *Research in Social Sciences and Technology*, 3(1), 54-73.
- Alogali, A. (2018). World Englishes: Changing the paradigm of linguistic diversity in global

- academia. *Research in Social Sciences and Technology*, 3(1), 54-73.
- Babbie, E. R. (2010) *The Practice of Social Research*. 12th ed. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Babbie, E. R. (2010). *The Practice of Social Research*. 12th ed. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth
- Berns, M. (2019). *World Englishes and communicative competence. The handbook of world Englishes*, (pp, 674-685). Wiley Online Library
- Bolton, K. (2018). World Englishes and second language acquisition. *World Englishes*, 37(1), 5-18.
- Bolton, K. (2019). *World Englishes: Current debates and future directions. The handbook of world Englishes*, (pp, 5-18). Wiley Online Library
- Bruthiaux, P. (2010). World Englishes and the Classroom: An EFL Perspective. *TESOL Quarterly*. 44 (2), 365-379.
- Coskun, A. (2011). Future English teachers' attitudes towards EIL Pronunciation. *The Journal of English as an International Language*. 6(2), 47-68.
- Crystal, D. (2004). *The Language Revolution*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Graddol, D. 2006. *English Next: Why Global English May Mean the End of 'English as a Foreign Language'*. London: British Council.
- Holliday, A. (2005) *The Struggle to Teach English As an International Language*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press. Oxford Applied Linguistics.
- Ironsi, C. S. (2020a). Strategies for student engagement in remote online learning. A case study of Northern Cyprus. *RUNAS. Journal of Education and Culture*, 1(2), 18-31. <https://doi.org/10.46652/runas.v1i1.19>.
- Ironsi, C. S. (2020b). Impact of Test Anxiety on Test Scores of Preservice Teachers in Northern Cyprus. *International Journal of Educational Management and Development Studies*, 1(2), 9 – 36.
- Ironsi, C. S. (2021c). African Immigrant Teachers Teaching Young EFL Learners: A Racial Discrimination Study, *IAFOR Journal of Education: Inclusive Education*, 9(1), 59-79. <https://doi.org/10.22492/ije.9.1.04>.
- Jenkins, J. (2006). Current Perspectives on Teaching World Englishes and English as an International Language. *TESOL Quarterly*, 40(1), 157-181.
- Jenkins, J. (2009). *World Englishes: A Resource Book for Students* (2nd ed.) London: Routledge.
- Jordão, C.M. (2009). English as a foreign language, globalization, and conceptual questioning. *Globalization, Societies, and Education*, 7(1), 95-107.
- Kachru, B. (1985). *Standards, codification and sociolinguistic realism: the English language in the outer circle'* in R. Quirk and H.G. Widdowson (eds): *English in the World: Teaching and Learning the Languages and Literatures*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 11-30.
- Kachru, B. B. (2019). World Englishes and culture wars. *The handbook of world Englishes*, (pp, 447-471). Wiley Online Library
- Kirkpatrick, A. (2007). *World Englishes. Implications for International Communication and English Language Teaching*. Cambridge University Press.
- Kirkpatrick, A. (2010). *The Routledge Handbook of World Englishes*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Kubota, R. (2018). Unpacking research and practice in world Englishes and Second Language Acquisition. *World Englishes*, 37(1), 93-105.
- Macías, D. (2010). Considering New Perspectives in ELT in Colombia. *HOW*, 17. 110-125.
- Matsuda, A. (2019). World Englishes in English language teaching: Kachru's six fallacies and the TEIL paradigm. *World Englishes*, 38(1-2), 144-154.
- Matsuda, A., & Friedrich, P. (2010). English as an International Language: A Curriculum Blueprint. *World Englishes*, 30 (3), 332-344.
- Mauranen, A. (2018). Second language acquisition, world Englishes, and English as a lingua franca (ELF). *World Englishes*, 37(1), 106-119.
- Maviú, B. (2009). *Kıbrıs Türk Öğretmenler Sen Publications*.
- Pennycook, A. (1994) *The Cultural Politics of English as an International Language*. London; New York: Longman. Language in Social Life.
- Perry, Theresa & Delpit, Lisa D. (1998). *English (Language) It Is Political! The Real Ebonics Debate*. Beacon Press. Web.
- Qiong, H. (2004). Why China English Should Stand Alongside British, American, and the Other World Englishes. *English Today: The International Review of The English Language*, 20 (2), 26-33.
- Rezaei, S., Khosravizadeh, P., & Mottaghi, Z. (2019). Attitudes toward world Englishes among Iranian English language learners. *Asian Englishes*, 21(1), 52-69.

- Sari, D., & Yusuf, Y. (2009). The Role of Attitudes and Identity from Non-native Speakers of English towards English Accents. *Journal of English As an International Language*, 4 (1), 110-128.
- Seidlhofer, B. (2011). *Understanding English as an International Language*. Oxford. Oxford University Press.
- Sharifian, F. & Kirkpatrick, A. (2011). *English as an International Language: An Overview of the Paradigm*. Retrieved on November 20, 2012, from: <http://www.arts.monash.edu.au/eil/lecture-2011>.
- Sharifian, F. (2009). *English as an International Language: Perspectives and Pedagogical Issues*. *Multilingual Matters / Channel View Publications*, UK. Web.
- Skutnabb-Kangas, T. (2001). The globalization of (educational) language rights. *International Review of Education*, 47 (3), 201-219.
- Sorace, A. (2003). *Near-nativeness. The handbook of second language acquisition*, (pp,130, 151). Wiley
- Tahmasbi, S., Hashemifardnia, A., & Namaziandost, E. (2019). Standard English or world Englishes: Issues of ownership and preference. *Journal of Teaching English Language Studies*, 7(3), 83-98. Learning.
- White, L., & Genesee, F. (1996). How native is near-native? The issue of ultimate attainment in adult second language acquisition. *Second language research*, 12(3), 233-265.