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*Iranian Journal  
of  
Language Teaching Research*

BOOK REVIEW



***ELF and Applied Linguistics: Reconsidering Applied Linguistics Research from ELF Perspectives, Kumiko Murata (Ed.), Routledge (2024) 228+xiv pp. ISBN: 9781032489292 (hbk)***

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Given the essential status of English as a lingua franca (ELF) in applied linguistics (AL), *ELF and Applied Linguistics—Reconsidering Applied Linguistics Research from ELF Perspectives* calls for a radical reappraisal of the principles and practices of English language education in the current globalized world. Written by some of the leading figures in the field, this edited volume examines the impact of ELF on applied linguistics to encourage an open and reasoned debate.

The chapters highlight the promises and dilemmas that the increasing prominence of ELF brings about to various areas of applied linguistics. The authors point to the need for changes in response to the shifting landscapes and propose new research paradigms for language teaching pedagogy. By situating ELF and its research explicitly in the constantly evolving multilingual context, these substantial contributions serve to facilitate AL to become a more robust enterprise, both theoretically and methodologically.

After a detailed introduction by the editor, the following 12 chapters are thematically grouped into four parts. Part I, “ELF research and communication: diverse perspectives”, consists of two contributions. Chapter 2, “Conceptualising ELF and applied linguistics” by Henry Widdowson and Barbara Seidlhofer, demands a reconceptualization of established assumptions. They ask if applied linguistics is concerned with “real-world problems in which language is a central issue” (Brumfit 1997: 93), the question arises as to how a problem is to be defined, from whose point of view, and to whose advantage (this volume, p.31). Chapter 3, “Translanguaging and intercultural communication: Rethinking cultural thought patterns” by Li Wei, argues that ELF studies raise critical questions about the ownership of English. A useful and important task for applied linguists is to foster the learner’s ability of transpositioning, a necessity in effective and equitable intercultural communication, without reference to hegemonic normative norms of any named culture or language. (p.44)

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10.30466/ijltr.2025.55750.2872

Part II, “ELF and applied linguistics research: regional perspectives”, considers how and to what extent ELF is influenced by the local scenario. The authors draw insights not only from the theories of AL and ELF but also from their own lingua-cultural and geopolitical backgrounds. Chapter 4, “The Global South has been speaking: ELF and higher education” by Clarissa Menezes Jordão, sounds a wake-up call for an epistemic turn to create spaces of resistance where more equalitarian practices around English and internationalization can be devised and constructed. Chapter 5, “English as a lingua franca in ASEAN and implications for applied linguistics research” by Azirah Hashim, contends that with current developments impacting on ELF, curricula, teacher education and assessment will all have to be reconsidered. Likewise, Chapter 6, “ELT in South Korea from the perspectives of ELF and WE” by Joo-Kyung Park and Kiwan Sung, puts forward some suggestions in order to align curricular directions, instructional practices, and teacher education into more future-oriented English teaching and learning. Chapter 7, “Applied linguistics in Japan from BELF perspectives” by Hajime Terauchi, Sayako Maswana and Hisashi Naito, claims that it is imperative to develop language policies that are tailored to the demands of globalization, including guidelines for English education at all levels. Chapter 8, “Three models of ELF instruction: From a pedagogical perspective” by Qiufang Wen, aims to fill the gap between applied linguistics and English language education by presenting three relevant models or frameworks of ELF instruction: a model of intercultural communicative competence, a framework of ELF teaching content and objectives, and Scenario-Based Pedagogy in the Production-Oriented Approach (By SBP, teachers intentionally design possible events which provide students with opportunities to complete an activity with potential communicative values. By POA, teaching starts with output and ends with output while processing input is in service to producing output.).

Part III, “ELF and perspectives on multilingual communication and education”, focuses on the roles of lingua franca communication as a meaning-making practice employed by people in today’s multicultural and multilingual world. While Chapter 9, “Rethinking English as a lingua franca from decolonial perspectives” by Yumi Matsumoto and Ryuko Kubota, intends to make a positive move toward achieving equitable multilingualism to expand existing ELF research boundaries, Chapter 10, “Going beyond English-only medium instruction: Challenges of multilingual education as an LPP mechanism” by Masakazu Lino, seeks to reexamine how English-medium instruction (EMI) and study-abroad programs are functioning as a language policy and planning (LPP) mechanism to raise awareness of ELF concepts in higher education in Japan. Interestingly, Chapter 11, “Why aviation English is not ELF” by Dominique Estival and Alastair Pennycook, points out that one of the problems shared by ELF and aviation English is naming the medium of communication as English. First language speakers of English all too often consider English to be their own, a medium with which they are familiar and in which they assume they should have natural speaking rights. This Anglophone-based monolingual mentality has negative implications for ELF and applied linguistics.

Part IV, “ELF and assessment—challenging the assumed paradigm?”, casts a critical view on the internationally available standard language tests, which are based on native English speaker (NES) norms. Chapter 12, “A challenge for language testing: The assessment of English as a lingua franca” by Tim McNamara, alerts us of the problematic values that are implied in ELF test constructs and the clash that they involve with the interests of other stakeholders. Chapter 13, “Writtenness in assessed English: Implicit assumptions of a smooth read” by Joan Turner, convincingly states that there is a need for attitudinal shift in the uptake of writing. Expectations of writtenness in English need to change with increasing diversification of its users and contexts of use.

The collection of articles examines the potential for productive inter-fertilization between applied linguistics and ELF research. These intensive and lively discussions encapsulate most of the difficult issues that the emergence of ELF has set in train for AL-related research, teaching and testing industry. Specifically, it deserves credit for the following reasons:

First, this volume, in explicating the relationship of the two, revisits the definition of AL in relation to ELF. Applied linguistics is a major research domain that the conceptualization and description of ELF is bound to impinge on. The contributors relate their observations and claims of AI to insights emerging from descriptive ELF research. They maintain that several lingering issues of AL related to conceptualizations of ELF require more critical work and awareness. These include (a) focusing on English that further reinforces its global status; (b) focusing more on speech compared with other multimodal interactional resources (e.g., gestures); and (c) being rather exclusive in terms of where ELF research is generated. (p.142)

Second, this volume raises serious doubts on the legitimacy of AL as a discipline which has traditionally taken inner circle English as point of reference. It questions whether the discipline can continue to support the hegemonic inner circle varieties and more significantly, whose interests AL actually serves. By addressing concerns voiced by speakers of English outside the inner circle, it presents a strong case that breaking the ties of AL to native speakerism can better serve the needs of the majority of users of English in the expanding and outer circles (Kachru 1992). It cautions that the Anglo-centric orientation of AL coupled with an anti-ELF stance does not bode well for the discipline.

Third, this volume attempts to balance long-established research topics with newly-emerged ones (e.g. written academic ELF) and pins down central questions of English language education in both academic (e.g. Chapter 4) and corporate settings (e.g. Chapter 7), individual and societal levels (e.g. Chapters 8, 11), national and regional contexts (Part II). As such, it allows us to meaningfully engage in reflections about conceptual and empirical work in AL from various ELF perspectives.

That said, this book would certainly do better if it had set up a more comprehensive picture of global use of English across different sub-fields, including ELF lexicogrammar, phonology, pragmatics, etc. as utilized by a range of first-language speakers in different geopolitical settings (Jenkins et al, 2018). While South America (Chapters 4, 9), Southeast and East Asia (Chapters 5, 6, 7, 8, 10) have been given much space, other areas (e.g. Europe, South Africa, the Middle East) have been hardly touched upon. Hence, a more thorough overview of empirical research on all aspects of ELF interactions could provide a better and updated profile of ELF use.

To conclude, expounding on some of the most discussed themes and trends in ELF and applied linguistics, this edited volume makes an enlightening read for all scholars who wish to align their experiences with these insiders' views or to attest to the feasibility of these specialists' proposals. Either way, it will very likely stimulate more interest in EFL thinking and research, and suggest more effective steps forward in the crucial agenda of applied linguistics worldwide.

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