3

English as an International Language Pedagogy: A Sustainable Alternative for Teaching English in the GCC Region

Ali Fuad Selvi and Bedrettin Yazan

Introduction

The exponential growth of English as a global language is now an international phenomenon which has a wide spectrum of local impacts in areas like education, trade, tourism and foreign relations. According to McKay (2002), what makes English different from other widely spoken languages such as Mandarin, Spanish, and Arabic is the fact that English is spoken by a large number of native speakers of other languages and serves as the de facto lingua franca in the 21st century. Although statistics vary, English is used by approximately 1.5 billion speakers with varying degrees of competencies (Curtis and Romney 2006), 375 million of them as their first language, and as the national language or as an official language in about 75 countries (Braine 2005). Today, the English language is unquestionably the lingua franca of the world (Crystal 2012; Graddol 2006) and, consequently, is at the center of the linguistic, ideological, sociocultural, political, and pedagogical implications (Sharifian 2009).

Considered as “the world’s first truly global language” (Crystal 2012: 21), “the common linguistic denominator” (Power 2007) or “the international language par excellence” (Phillipson 1992: 6), English fulfills an array of pragmatic and
instrumental functions in all domains of life, and the field of education is no exception. For this reason, English is appreciated for being a basic survival skill (Graddol 1997) and considered a necessary development (Zughoul 2003) and sine qua non for citizens of the globalized world (Elyas 2008). Along the same lines, Crystal (2012) argues that in order for a language to attain a global status it should have a special role recognized in every country in the form of official language used in government, courts, education, or in the nation's educational system.

The global influx of the English language is probably best manifested in the context of English language teaching across the world. The increased importance of the English language is ubiquitously evident at every level of the educational curricula worldwide. The global demand for English language proficiency necessitates providing a quality education for English language learners and “the need for better accommodating the needs of English language learners has no geographical and professional boundaries” (Selvi 2011: 389). Therefore, English acquires topmost priority in the educational agenda of many countries, and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states (Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and the Sultanate of Oman) are no exception (Ahmed 2010; Ali 2009; Al-Issa 2006, 2011; Karmani 2005a, 2005b; Mohd-Asraf 2005; Moody 2009; Syed 2003; Zughoul 2003). The English language teaching (ELT) enterprise has been exponentially growing in the region for several decades. The increasing number of expatriate ELT professionals, huge budget allocations to planning and implementing ELT programs, the proliferation of respected institutions of higher education with greater emphasis on the English language are testament to this fact.

Despite the fact that the primary driving force behind the formation of the GCC was the idea of a cooperative framework to promote coordination and integration and sustain cooperation and collaboration among these states, the English language teaching enterprise has not received enough attention from the member states (Al-Issa 2011). The perceived status of English as a language of successful career, being the lingua franca of the international business, and the elitism/privatization trend in education all contribute to the growing interest in English language. However, this bias in English has created a growing public concern in the region and, therefore, resulted in an increasing emphasis on Arabic as a linguistic tool connecting with the new generation, rich cultural heritage, representations of personal identity, and trajectories of economic prosperity. Therefore, being an English language teacher in the shadow of this delicate interplay between English and Arabic at various levels is an unfathomably complex endeavor, particularly due to increasingly fluid ethnolinguistic, geographical, and ideological boundaries in the GCC region.
Handling this complexity entails a novel perspective to understanding the ELT pedagogy to prepare English learners for intercultural communication in globalized contexts.

In this paper, we set the scene with a survey of the use of English in the Middle East/GCC region at the current time with specific references to the literature on how it is being taught and the critiques it receives. In the light of this portrayal, we will present theoretical underpinnings and practical manifestations of the EIL pedagogy (references to varieties, standards, models and policies) and describe the reasons why it should stand out as a viable response to the need for English language teaching practices in the GCC region. In the conclusion section, we intend to share some key strategies for teachers and teacher educators in the GCC region to appropriate EIL pedagogy in a way that suits their particular individual contexts, needs, learners and teaching settings, as echoed in a recent TESOL White Paper (Mahboob and Tilakaratna 2012). The primary audience of this paper includes but is not limited to teacher educators, administrators, policymakers, and researchers who are engaged in various levels of teaching and education of pre- and in-service teachers in or for the GCC region.

An Overview of the English Language in the GCC Region: Opportunities and Challenges

The unprecedented spread of English as the world’s lingua franca in the age of globalization created a widespread impetus towards learning the language, which endogenously contributed to the emergence of a lucrative ELT business. Considered “the UK’s biggest export success story” by the British Council websites for Portugal and Mexico, today, ELT is a multi-billion industry. In order not to be deprived of monetary, materialistic, linguistic, social, and symbolic values associated with and accessed by means of the English language, governments in the GCC region have embarked upon a series of educational reforms that were structured around the English language (Ahmed 2010; Al-Issa 2011; Karmani 2005a, 2005b; Zughoul 2003). However, the missing piece in the picture is an investigation of the interplay between ELT and its implications on the contextual dynamics of the Gulf region. The discussion within the scope of the GCC region rests upon four major pillars:

1. Current status of English as the language of globalization
2. Relationship between Islam and the English language
3. Employment landscape for both local and foreign teachers, and
4. The ever-diversifying multilingual and multicultural milieu of the GCC region.

**English as the Language of Globalization**

Responding to the unprecedented need for English as the language of globalization has been a challenge at global scale, and the GCC region is no exception. From this point of view, the challenges associated with the teaching of English in the region share similarities with other contexts around the world. In his analysis, Syed (2003) concluded that the current challenges of ELT in the Gulf region primarily included lack of motivation, heavy reliance on memorization and rote learning, the use of ahistorical curricular initiatives and methodologies, the emphasis on high-stake testing, and inadequately trained teachers. In the same vein, Moody (2009) criticized the implementation of communicative language teaching policies as reflected in textbook production and the implemented means of assessment. Al-Issa (2011) pointed out that these trends are still largely in vogue in many parts of the GCC states and the Arab world and attributed to such trends as a determinant of a relatively weaker economic growth and unemployment crisis in the region (Al-Issa 2009). A report entitled “The GCC in 2020 - The Gulf and its People” by The Economist Intelligence Unit (2009) indicated that the large-scale expansion of higher education is likely to have profound impacts on (a) increased foreign involvement in education, (b) the greater need for English language skills, (c) the extension of ELT through K-12 levels (which may result in the challenge of maintaining high Arabic literacy standards and generating sentiments about English) and (d) the widening range of educational opportunities for women in education and in the workforce (which may result in public debates about the cultural appropriateness). As a result, it is suggested that the current status of English as the language of globalization necessitates a fundamental shift in approach, methodology, curriculum, and perceptions at large (Zughoul 2003).

Despite the fact that English has been playing a major role for the countries in the Arab world as well as for the entire GCC region, the sociolinguistic and educational implications of the English language for the region and its people necessitates a closer and a more regional focus on this issue (e.g., Damerow and Bailey 2014). Today, there seems to be a tension in the Arab Gulf with respect to the role that the English language plays vis-à-vis the local languages, and most importantly Arabic. On one end of the spectrum, there has been a growing interest in educating students in English as the language of science, business, technology, and international relations. On the other end of the spectrum, English is severely
criticized for being the language of instruction (Belhiah and Elhami 2014), marginalizing Arabic as the language of research and academic publication (Hanafi and Arvanitis 2014) and devaluing the importance of Arabic and Arab identity. As a result, there has been a growing trend among scholars, policymakers and public figures to revert to Arabic as the language of instruction (e.g., Qatar University), place greater emphasis on students’ language development in Arabic (e.g., courses in Modern Standard Arabic at Northwestern University, creating instructional materials and different learning tracks for Arabic speakers at Georgetown University), and prioritize Arabic as a linguistic tool to reinstate and maintain the Arab identity (Randall and Samimi 2010). More recently, a bilingual approach to education emerges as a compromising, viable and balanced approach that seems to address both global ideals and local realities (Belhiah and Elhami 2014).

Islam and the English Language: The (Un)easy Relationship

The interesting and delicate interplay between English and Islam has traditionally been conceptualized in terms of a binary discourse of clash or opportunity. On the one hand, English is seen as the flag of Judeo-Christian culture and values, a vehicle for the transmission of Western values (Mohd-Asraf 2005), and a linguistic force destructing and demonizing Islam (Karmani 2005a, 2005b). Therefore, the only justification to learn English would be to “learn the language of your enemy.” On the other hand, the learning of English may have additive value and pragmatic advantages for Muslim populations (Mohd-Asraf 2005). Rahman (2005) identified three “Islamic” responses to English, namely (a) rejection and resistance (by Islamic conservatives), (b) acceptance and assimilation (by the secular professional and middle classes) and (c) pragmatic utilization (by Islamists). This new trend, encapsulated as the promotion of “more English and less Islam” (Glasser 2003), perpetuates the religion-oriented anti-English sentiments and depicts English and Islam as polar opposites (Karmani 2005b). Mahboob and Elyas (2014: 128) in their recent examination of English in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, acknowledge that English in the local context is “not neutral,” rather “loaded with political, religious, social, and economic overtones and is a topic of heated debate...[and spurred] processes of resistance to English that question its validity and contribute to a shift in the language to suit local beliefs and practices.” In his response to Karmani, Kabel (2007: 136) highlighted the need for “tak[ing] into account how the language is constantly and unpredictably appropriated and creatively reshaped and expropriated to give voice to emerging agencies and subjectivities.” In his compelling case against Karmani (2005a, 2005b), Elyas (2008: 38) echoed the additive value of bilingualism.
and biculturalism (Mohd-Asraf 2005), and more importantly, underscored the importance of “conflict” “as a stimulating mind activity” that may lead to mediation across languages and cultures:

Despite the fact that learners are exposed to a language ‘embodying’ values and ideologies of the West sometimes in conflict with their own and drawn by coercion or alluring fascination, it can be seen as a stimulating mind activity, and in turn, an opportunity to look ‘outside the box’ and appreciate differences between the two cultures.

Quite interestingly, the opening chapter of the recent British Council (2013) report investigating the perspectives on English in the Middle East and North Africa is devoted to the new role of English as a global language in promoting interfaith and co-existence (Al Kilani 2013). In her analysis, Al Kilani recognizes the interesting and complex conceptualization of the English, historically stuck between labels such as the “language of the enemy” and “a linguistic link to peace, interfaith, dialogue and intercultural understanding” between the East and the West. On the one hand, there is the escalating violence against Christians in Iraq and Egypt, increasing tensions fueled by the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, marketed as efforts of “democratization” and “emancipation.” On the other hand, there is the inflation of hatred towards and discrimination against Muslim communities in the Western countries propagated by the ideological extremism exacerbated by Al-Qaeda’s aggression in the West in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks. Built upon these historical as well as recent sociopolitical incidents, the “collective memory of grave injustices on both sides” thus endogenously feeds this relationship, often defined by unprecedented intolerance and a skeptical approach in dealing with “the other” (Al Kilani 2013: 13). Al Kilani (2013: 14) ends her sociolinguistic and political analysis with a linguistic reference to English as a language of “dialogue,” which may serve as an important tool in “presenting each other’s arguments and learn to embrace new virtues that provide the basis of learning, understanding and cohabiting with each other.”

The Employment Landscape: Double-edged Sword

Being one of the fastest-growing populations in the world with an increasing proportion of youth, and striving to move towards a knowledge economy and become a global actor, the GCC countries are facing the pressing challenge of preparing the youth for the labor market in the 21st century (Al-Ruwaihi, chapter 3, this volume). The last decade has been an era of proliferation of transnational higher education in
the world, where “the Gulf States have been the largest recipients of transnational higher education globally, whilst Australia, the UK and USA have been the largest providers” (Wilkins 2011: 74). For instance, the cities of Sharjah and Dubai in the UAE established university cities (namely, Sharjah University City and Dubai Academic City), and the UAE continues to host the largest number of international branch campuses (n=37) in the region and in the world (The Observatory of Borderless Higher Education 2009). GCC governments have placed considerable emphasis on higher education reforms (e.g., adopting international models, allocating large amount of funds, establishing new institutions of higher education), which spearheaded a glocal response in the region (e.g., influenced by education systems of the West and Asia in a fashion to be congruent with local traditions and values, including the provision of education for female students through segregated sections) (Al-Ruwaihi, chapter 3, this volume). Smith (2008: 20-21) argued that the countries of the GCC “may be in the process of creating the world’s most globalised higher education system ... [one] which is largely built upon standards, systems and faculty imported from Western Europe and North America and which operates almost entirely in English.” Therefore, “the GCC countries are actively encouraging English-medium Western higher education for their citizens with the aim of increasing their productivity in the globalized economy of the 21st Century” (Hudson 2012: 3).

Human resource development in the GCC region as a higher education hub has been historically outsourced to professionals both at teacher and administrator levels in government-sponsored institutions of higher education from Inner Circle countries (Baalawi 2009). Unfortunately, a cursory review of the advertisements for ELT positions in the region easily reveals instances of discrimination such as “native speaker only”, “passport holders from Canada, New Zealand, Australia, US or UK,” or instances of lack of professionalism such as “formal education/certification in teaching not required,” “experience is helpful but not compulsory.” Consequently, “English teachers from the Outer and Expanding Circles have never filled teaching positions in well-established private schools, colleges and universities in the GCC” (Ali 2009: 36). Hudson (2012: 2) recognized that there are English teachers working in the universities and colleges of the GCC region from various linguistic backgrounds; however, “the fact that the majority tend to be hired from Anglophone countries such as the UK, USA, Canada, Australia, Ireland etc., could be said to reflect such discriminatory hiring practices,” a trend which resonates the employment issues and concerns in different parts of the world (Selvi 2014).
Increasing Multilingualism and Multiculturalism in the Region

By and large, the role and status of English in the GCC region share certain similarities with other countries in different corners of the world belonging to the Expanding Circle of the Kachruvian (1992) concentric conceptualization of the World Englishes. However, a closer look at the GCC context reveals diversity weaved into the historical, cultural, religious, political, and economic fabric of these countries. This intragroup variability necessitates a more in-depth analysis for any individual who would like to get a comprehensive account of the GCC region. While the notion of diversity in the region transcends linguistic spheres, the discussion within the scope of this paper is limited to the depiction of a linguistic portrayal of the region with specific emphasis on the uses, users, and instruction of the EIL.

In a geographical context welcoming a total of 45.9 million people spread over 2,423 million km² in six states, with a total GDP of $1.37 trillion and of $29.900 per capita, the GCC region offers much more than strong economic figures. It goes without saying that the official language of the GCC region is Arabic. The Arabic language in the Gulf region is a complex endeavor for linguists and sociolinguists who have been struggling to develop a typology since it comprises various dialects, categorically referred to as Gulf Arabic. Another distinction is between what is commonly referred to as Modern Standard Arabic (the standardized and literary variety derived from Classical Arabic) and Classical Arabic (based on Quranic form of Arabic). While Arabic is the dominant actor in the cultural and linguistic landscape of the GCC region, it is not the only actor. Other languages such as Persian, Urdu, Hindi, Tagalog, and Swahili, among others, create an additive value to the linguistic repertoire of the people living in the region and contribute to the establishment of a multilingual and multicultural GCC region. The current cultural and linguistic landscape of the region would be further flourished with the possible accession of Jordan and Morocco into the GCC since these countries are home to speakers of such languages as Berber, French, Russian, Armenian, and German.

The depiction of the linguistic and cultural landscape of the GCC region would be incomplete if it did not include a special paragraph for English. English is widely spoken in the region due to its importance as a global language, its presence in the educational curricula in K-12 and higher education settings, the political and economic incentive or tendency to maintain business relationships in which English is used as the language of business transaction, and the presence of large expatriate communities (Ali 2009). Because of these idiosyncratic features of the GCC region, a great majority of the 25–35 million users of English in the Middle East (Mahboob
2012) is located in this region. When the expatriate population living in the region is added to this picture, the total figure certainly increases. Across the GCC region, English plays a prominent role in the educational realms, with different points of onset in the educational curricula. As Mahboob (2012) reminds us, the existence of English language newspapers (both in print and online formats), the small yet growing number of individuals choosing English as the linguistic medium to transmit their creative thoughts, reflections, and works, English-Arabic signs across the region are all manifestations of the deeply ingrained role and importance of English in the region. This exemplifies that “the English language has local characteristics and shows signs of undergoing a process of nativization” (Mahboob 2012: 16), which serves as a testament to the growing prominence of the English language on the one hand, and the expanding diversification of the local uses of the English language on the other. Perhaps the most interesting finding of the analysis by Mahboob and Elyas (2014: 128) in the Saudi Arabian context is their claim that the English language in Saudi Arabia is in the process of being nativized and, therefore, Saudi English as an emergent variety carries “a local flavor” and “recognizably local cultural, religious and social values and beliefs.”

Some Fundamental Questions in ELT

The unprecedented global spread of English, the emergence of its nativized varieties, and the rapidly increasing number of non-native speakers (NNSs) of English across the world created an unparalleled global interest in teaching and learning English. As a pedagogical response, increasing importance is attached to developing principles and practices specific for teaching EIL. In this vein, McKay (2002: 1) argues, “the teaching and learning of an international language must be based on an entirely different set of assumptions than the teaching and learning of any other second and foreign language.” This simple yet profound statement generates a series of questions surrounding EIL pedagogy: Whose language are we now talking about? Which speakers are we modeling our instruction upon? Which language variety/ies should we be teaching to our learners? Which teachers are qualified to teach the English language? Which approaches are the best in teaching? These are some fundamental questions that should be of interest to all ELT professionals in the new millennium and therefore define our goals throughout this paper.

Those questions are relevant for the practitioners of English in the GCC region where governments are committed to building their presence in the global arena. The enterprise of ELT in the GCC states is marked by traditional language
teaching pedagogies at the classroom level, although English is widely acknowledged as
the language of globalization or as an indispensable tool to access international
communication (Al-Issa 2011). Scholars observed a heavy use of outdated curricula
and methods, unmotivated language learners, huge impact of high-stakes national
exams, poorly educated cadre of teachers, as well as the integration of communicative
language teaching in English language policies with no consideration of the local
cultural and linguistic contexts (Al-Issa 2011; Moody 2009; Syed 2003). Therefore,
it is crucially important to address the fundamental questions mentioned previously
and discuss their implications for the GCC context.

**Whose Language?**

As is plain from the discussion so far, English has become an international
commodity used more by its NNSs. It has been used, modified, and appropriated in
different countries for various purposes. Its speakers and their cultural and linguistic
features tremendously impacted English, which led to the emergence of its varieties
across the globe. Therefore, people today use English mostly to communicate with
“multilingual speakers than with monolingual speakers, and for their own cultural,
social, political, and economic purposes, removed from Inner Circle norms”
(Burns 2005: 2). Inner Circle countries which are considered to originally hold the
ownership of English no longer have a worldwide influence on it. English does not
anymore belong to any particular nation, culture, or region and anyone who uses it
can become a legitimate user of English and claim its ownership. It “belongs to all
people who speak it, whether native and nonnative, whether ESL or EFL, whether
standard or non-standard” (Norton 1997: 427).

**Which Speakers?**

Since English is no longer deemed as an exclusive property of its native speaker
(NS) communities, the notion of NS as the norm of language teaching and learning
needs to be interrogated. The slippery term of NS has been exposed to a lengthy
debate among language scholars (Rudolph, Selvi, & Yazan 2015; Selvi 2014).
Traditional ELT views NSs as the absolute source of linguistic knowledge and
the goal of language learning and teaching, whereas it labels NNSs as deficient
communicators of the language (Firth and Wagner 1997). This stigmatization
reflects a deficit perspective in language classroom where teachers find themselves
“negatively judging the gaps between learner and NS production rather than
acknowledging learners’ ongoing gains” (Burns 2005: 4). This atmosphere adversely
impacts learners’ motivation and identity by setting an unrealistic and unattainable
target for them. It fails to serve as a useful measure to inform learning goals and teacher qualities, yet its persistent presence can be observed in every element of our field from teacher preparation to course books and students’ and teachers’ beliefs and attitudes. As summarized by Jenkins (2009) the notion of NS perpetuates monolingualism, essentializes Anglo-American user of English as a reference point, marginalizes non-native speakers, fails to recognize proficient speakers in Outer/Expanding Circles and emphasize learner accomplishments, and creates a false dichotomy between speakers and teachers of English (NS vs. NNS).

**Which Language?**

The spread of English and emergence of indigenized Englishes led to the reconsideration of the notion of instructional “standard,” too. Burns (2005) observes that some scholars worry that because of the variations across the uses in EIL, English speakers will no longer be intelligible to each other. They argue for a single NS standard to serve in all contexts. Others attend to social, cultural, and linguistic differences across English-speaking settings and find this argument utterly unrealistic. For instance, McKay (2002: 13) maintains that “it is the users’ cultural content and their sense of the appropriate use of English that should inform language pedagogy.” If ELT views British or American English varieties as universal instructional standards and recognize them as desirable language learning targets, it will neglect the current realities emerging in the EIL contexts. Assigning a single native variety as the target in the pedagogical realm means conceiving language as an unchanging phenomenon dearth of dynamism, and causes the prioritization of imitation over communication as the major goal in language learning process (Burns 2005).

Mahboob’s (2014) three dimensional model of language variation presents a rigorous framework to apprehend the variation in English and to address this variation in conceptualizing and designing the pedagogy of teaching EIL. His three major dimensions comprise: (a) users of English (local vs. global, low vs. high social distance); (b) uses of English (specialized/technical vs. everyday/casual discourses); and (c) modes of communication (written vs. oral texts). He views each dimension as an independent continuum which is influential on what choices English users make when communicating. However, putting the three dimensions together, Mahboob (2014: 262) offers a model to “map … variations [in English] out and study them systematically” in global and glocal contexts and to understand English varieties based on community rather than nativeness or ownership. For example, it presents eight domains of variation in language from “local, written, everyday”
to “global, oral, specialized.” Parsing English out by using those domains can be instrumental to make instructional decisions regarding what aspects of English to integrate in the curriculum in the glocal contexts of ELT.

**Which Teachers?**

Although around 80 percent of English teachers in the world are NNS of English (Canagarajah 2005), and this trend is likely to continue, NNS teachers are not given equal opportunities when compared to NS teachers. While the former are believed to be less qualified and linguistically less competent, the latter are characterized as the ideal teacher in the classroom because of their “nativeness” bio-developmental feature. This pervasive misconception haunting the field of ELT is named as the “native speaker fallacy” (Phillipson 1992). Sadly, this fallacy which falsely dichotomizes NNS teachers and NS teachers is still a reality in the field of ELT (Selvi 2014). It causes detrimental impacts on teachers’ professional persona, leads to unprofessional favoritism and frequently results in hiring discrimination. The contexts of ELT in the GCC states are no exception, because employers in those states tend to view nativeness as a primary quality when hiring teachers of English. This tendency casts a shadow over professional qualifications that both native and non-native speaking teachers have as a double-edged sword. In their research of ELT job advertisements from East Asia and the Middle East, Mahboob and Golden (2013) observed that nativeness was one of the key requirements that employers include in those advertisements. Recently, as a response to this discrimination and unprofessional practices, there is a growing greater advocacy in teaching, research, and teacher education efforts that aim to empower NNS teachers, promote professionalism, and more collaborative and democratic practices for qualified teachers regardless of any label.

**Which Approaches?**

The Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach has long reigned supreme in the field of ELT. However, it has now begun to receive a lot of criticism because it is incapable of paying sufficient attention to local culture of learning and the cultural and linguistic needs of the local community, while it forces the utilization of prepackaged, one-size-fits-all methods, techniques, materials, and assessment tools borrowed from the West (Bax 2003). These criticisms have brought about a novel understanding of method which is called post-methodology and it highlights “a pedagogy of particularity, practicality, and possibility” (Kumaravadivelu 2003). This paradigm shift entails relying more on local teachers as prominent actors
of curricular reforms and key decision makers who hold the best knowledge of learners’ needs and goals, local dynamics and intricacies, global context along with the realities of EIL. However, in the implementation of the post-method paradigm, which assigns many pedagogical and social responsibilities to teachers (Akbari 2008), those teachers who are under-resourced and over-worked should be provided support. Otherwise, it might lead to too much reliance on local teachers who are not given any clear guidelines unlike methods in the past (Akbari 2008).

**EIL in the GCC Region: A Sustainable Alternative**

Having explicated the current sociolinguistic and educational landscape of the GCC region, we now would like to describe the fundamental pillars of the EIL pedagogy and discuss its relevance and plausibility as a sustainable alternative for the GCC region.

**EIL Pedagogy Offers a Plausible and Sustainable Alternative that is Capable of Responding to the Current Status of English as the Language of Globalization**

We argue that EIL pedagogy offers a plausible and sustainable alternative that is capable of responding to the current status of English as the language of globalization. EIL pedagogy is capable of recognizing Englishes as valid varieties in the world, providing more sensitive instructional principles and practices for speakers from diverse ethnolinguistic and cultural backgrounds, and adjusting the teaching of English to the local cultures of learning so as to meet the local needs in a sensitive way (Selvi and Yazan 2013). The major principles and practices of EIL pedagogy reveal “how the teaching and learning of English can be undertaken in such a way as to maintain linguistic diversity while providing equal access to the acquisition of English” (McKay and Bokhorst-Heng 2008: 21). EIL pedagogy:

- is a radical shift from the traditional conceptualization of ELT
- is sensitive to the local teaching context and culture of learning
- is sensitive to achieving balance between local and global concerns
- offers a viable alternative to NS framework in terms of norms and cultural tendencies in the curriculum, methods, material design, assessment, teacher qualities, and identity
- recognizes and promotes plurality of present-day local and global English uses, users, and contexts
• equips learners with a repertoire of sociolinguistic and cultural strategies to better function as competent users in cross-cultural encounters
• encourages English-speaking ownership and participation in (mostly digital) global discourse communities
• recognizes the importance of local teachers in designing and providing socially-sensitive, diverse and rich opportunities for ELT
• creates a global pedagogical space where multiple identities, realities, varieties, voices, and cultures co-exist
• examines sociocultural identity in respect to diverse teaching contexts of use and profiles of users
• redefines the notion of proficiency, authenticity, acceptability, and appropriateness in the learning, teaching and assessment of the language (Selvi and Yazan 2013: 39)

EIL Pedagogy Offers an Intellectual Space and Serves as a Pedagogical Tool that Fosters Negotiation of the Relationship Between Islam and the English Language

EIL pedagogy responds to the ongoing juxtaposition between English and Islam by serving as a contextually-sensitive alternative, coalescing individual aspirations with societal norms. There are two specific ways by which EIL pedagogy overcomes this challenge: (1) re-distributing the ownership of the language, and re-conceptualizing language teaching at the nexus of cultural globalization and identity formation, (2) challenging theoretical and pedagogical assumptions about ELT by promoting socioculturally-sensitive, locally-appropriate operations.

The primary impetus behind the EIL pedagogy is to move beyond the institutionalized structures perpetuating hegemony of English infused into the teaching of English language for several decades. The first step towards achieving this goal is to differentiate between the English language and English-speaking societies. For example, while Cooper (1988: 1) argues that “English is powerful… because the powerful use it and because they use it to pursue power,” Baker (2011: 88) approaches the matter more cautiously and distinguishes between “language” and “the people who use it.”

Yet it is not the language that is dominating but the people who use it. A language such as English is not intrinsically dominating. No language is more suited to oppression, domination, Westernization, secularization or imperialism than another.
It is the speakers of that language who are the oppressors and dominators. Whether English is empowering or divisive, it is those who, for example, impose, teach, learn and use it that make it so. The danger is that language is made the symbolic scapegoat for political and economic domination, which are, in fact, the consequences of people and politics.

Kubota and Lin (2009) and Lin (2008) recognized that the English language has been appropriated by the Inner Circle countries as an instrument for spreading Western cultural beliefs and practices; however, people across the world see it and use it as a communication tool. Kumaravadiivelu (2012) gives examples from countries such as India, Pakistan, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia where English language is used to meet the local educational and institutional needs. It is kept separate from cultural beliefs (in India, Krishnaswamy and Burde 1998), reflects Islamic values, and embodies South Asian Islamic sensitivities (in Pakistan, Mahboob 2009), prioritizes national and religious identities over the Western way of existence (in Turkey, Atay and Ece 2009) and is far from being a point of contradiction for Islamic and Arabic identity (in Saudi Arabia, Elyas 2008). For this reason, EIL pedagogy offers the possibility of stripping the English language off its hegemonic and imperialistic dimensions (Phillipson 1992) and a chance for “reshaping, remoulding, and adjusting” the language (Elyas 2008) to suit the contextual needs of the GCC region and its people.

In the process of coalescing the discourses of ELT and Islam, EIL pedagogy relies on a thorough evaluation of local needs and dynamics as well as the contribution of local professionals. Local teachers are considered to be agents of curricular reforms and decision-makers, who are cognizant of learners’ needs, local dynamics, global context, and realities of EIL. As McKay (2003a: 19) reminds us, the ultimate aim of the EIL pedagogy is to acknowledge the use of English in multilingual contexts recognize the multilingual context of English use and “to put aside a native speaker model of research and pedagogy. Only then can an appropriate EIL pedagogy be developed in which local educators take ownership of English and the manner in which it is taught.” Aligned with the waves of post-methodology, McKay (2002) argued that EIL pedagogy refrains from subscribing to a single set of methods and encourages teachers (both local and expatriate) to adapt their own approach in constant negotiation with the local sociopolitical (e.g., the role, importance and varieties of English, linguistic and cultural attitudes, the role of religion), institutional (e.g., the institution’s vision, mission, and philosophy of ELT) contexts, as well as the backgrounds of themselves (e.g., their academic
and professional training, teaching and learning experience, and familiarity with the teaching context) and students (e.g., their age, race, gender, religion, linguistic background, exposure to English and learning goals and aspirations).

**EIL Pedagogy Provides a Sustainable Response to Discrimination and Ensures a More Democratic Employment Landscape for Both Local and Foreign Teachers**

Despite the fact that the ownership of English is shared by all its speakers (Norton 1997), and 80 percent of English language teachers worldwide are thought to be non-native English speaking teachers (Canagarajah 2005), the dominant discourse of “native speaker fallacy” (Phillipson 1992) leads to detrimental consequences for the employment landscape of the teaching profession. Often times, NNS teachers encounter unethical and unprofessional treatments and discriminatory practices. Although this may be highly ironic for a field that constantly strives for values such as multilingualism, multiculturalism, diversity, and plurality, the discrimination on the basis of race, gender, ethnicity, and nativeness are still evident in job advertisements as well as in the figments of employers’ imagination (Selvi 2010).

It is a widely accepted fact that the ubiquitous presence of “native speakerism,” “an established belief that native-speaker teachers represent a ‘Western culture’ from which springs the ideals both of the English language and of English language teaching methodology” (Holliday 2005: 6), is detrimental for the English language teaching profession. This deficit view conceptualizes the native English-speaking teachers (NESTs) as the ideal teacher in the classroom, known as “native speaker fallacy” (Phillipson 1992), and thereby defines non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs) as linguistically, pedagogically, and professionally less qualified (Lippi-Green 1997; Maum 2003). This “linguistically unsound and pedagogically irrelevant but also politically pernicious” view leads to implicational exclusivity of ownership, linguistic elitism, and imperialism (Nayar 1994). In more practical terms, the anecdotal and empirical accounts suggest that the widespread occurrences of the native speaker fallacy (Phillipson 1992) in the ELT profession lead to “unprofessional favoritism” (Medgyes 2001) and thus, frequently result in hiring and workplace discrimination (Clark and Paran 2007; Flynn and Gulikers 2001; Mahboob, et al. 2004; Mahboob and Golden 2013; Moussu 2006; Selvi 2010), and in most cases often create asymmetrical power and salary relationship among teachers (Braine 1999, 2010).

The current employment landscape in the GCC region necessitates a profession-wide response to promote employment for “competent” teachers of English, regardless of ideologically infused, value-laden terms such as “native” or
“non-native”. The current discriminatory picture in the region damages qualified local teachers, impedes workforce cooperation among GCC states, and excludes professionals from Outer and Expanding Circles. Prioritizing teacher education, professionalism, and collaboration over binary oppositions such as native/non-native, EIL pedagogy provides a sustainable response to discrimination and ensures a more democratic employment and workplace conditions not only for local teachers but also for those who come from all Circles of Englishes. As a result of collaborative practices among teachers of English from various ethnolinguistic backgrounds, learners of English in the Gulf could gain access to more educationally, contextually, and socially-appropriate teaching practices and a wider sociolinguistic and intercultural repertoire (McKay 2002). In order to sustain this, EIL pedagogy needs (a) administrators/policy makers, who prioritize professionalism, teacher education, experience and expertise over accents, ethnic, racial, linguistic and cultural backgrounds, (b) in-service and pre-service teachers from all types of backgrounds (NSs and NNSs) who embrace these professional values to support one another in favor of collaboration and a greater recognition of diversity within teachers of English, and (c) scholars and teacher educators, who extend their research agenda and publication efforts along these professional values and infuse them in teacher education and professional development programs.

**EIL Pedagogy Is Sensitive to the Ever-diversifying Multilingual and Multicultural Milieu of the GCC Region**

With respect to the cultural and linguistic landscape of the GCC region, EIL pedagogy offers two major arguments: an equal distribution of the ownership of the language among the speakers of English, and the promotion of bilingual/multilingual and bicultural/multicultural context where other languages used by EIL users are recognized (McKay and Bokhorst-Heng 2008). To begin with, EIL pedagogy rests upon the premise that in today’s globalized world, “English is no longer exclusively owned by native-speaking communities but that its ownership is also shared by newly emerging members of the English-speaking community (i.e., non-native speakers), who therefore have a right to be heard in matters affecting the language” (Widdowson 1994 as cited in Llurda 2004: 314). English “is not a possession which [native speakers] lease out to others, while still retaining a freehold. Other people actually own it” (Widdowson 1994: 385). Thus, English belongs to either everyone or to no one (Norton 1997). Therefore, EIL is not an exclusive commodity of any language, cannot be linked to any single (or a set of) country or the culture of any single (or a set of) expatriates working in the GCC
region (Ali 2009). This unique status of English helps EIL users to meet their varying local needs, to engage in meaning-making and identity building. Thus, EIL users are able to co-construct hybrid identities as individuals who can use English as a glocalized (global and local) medium by means of three sources of culture: (1) cultural content from English-speaking countries, (2) local cultural content, and (3) international cultural content (McKay 2002). This fosters learners’ successful navigation in both local and global communities and negotiation and construction of hybrid identities (Alsagoff 2012). For McKay (2003b), this will bring positive implications on moving beyond native English-speaking culture as the basis for cultural content, informing the appropriate pedagogy by local expectations regarding the role of learning, learner and teacher, and recognizing the strengths of bilingual teachers of English.

The second point to be made is that EIL pedagogy is built upon promoting the use of individuals’ languages and supporting the development of bilingualism/multilingualism as opposed to monolingualism (McKay and Bokhorst-Heng 2008). The Arab world, including the GCC region, presents a typical case of diglossia, where multiple varieties of Arabic co-exist in specific domains. This situation becomes an even more interesting one with the realization of the multilingual landscape of the GCC region within a diglossic mother tongue and the growing importance of English. EIL pedagogy is a reaction against emphasizing English at the expense of the mother tongue. On the contrary, it specifically underscores the importance of linguistic and cognitive development in the first language for the development of the second language and recognizes all languages as an asset contributing to a user’s sociolinguistic repertoire.

Conclusion

In this paper, we presented a three-layer discussion. We first portrayed the current challenges inherent in the diverse uses, users, functions and contexts of English in the GCC region. Utilizing the GCC region and its idiosyncratic dynamics as a unit of analysis, the second section recognizes the necessity to offer a novel pedagogy in ELT, which is completely different from the existing foreign or second language teaching pedagogy. Departing from this realization, we provided the description of the major components of EIL pedagogy. Ultimately, we revisited the GCC context and explored the question of whether EIL pedagogy can constitute a plausible and sustainable alternative for the region and its challenges. More specifically, our discussion within the context of the GCC region revolved around four points: (a)
using EIL pedagogy to respond to the current status of English as the language of globalization which considerably influences the use of English in the region, (b) utilizing it as a pedagogical tool to foment a constructive relationship between Islamic values and understanding and the English language by eliminating the traditional juxtaposition between the two, (c) implementing EIL pedagogy to provide a democratic employment practice for foreign and local ELT practitioners in the region, and (d) using EIL pedagogy to generate ELT practices more sensitive to the ever-diversifying multilingual and multicultural milieu of the region.

If gatekeepers and policy-makers in ELT, as an international enterprise with tremendous potential, genuinely intend to provide an instructional framework, which fosters and encourages awareness of and sensitivity to local realities in specific contexts, then it needs a fundamental change in its conceptualization which can manifest as a new pedagogy. As Kumaravadivelu (2012: 24) contends, helping ELT “professionals generate sustainable knowledge systems that are sensitive to local historical, political, cultural, and educational exigencies” necessitates moving away from “an epistemic operation that continues to institutionalize the coloniality of English language education.” Through the discussion in this paper, we maintained that EIL pedagogy can play a critical role in this “move” in the GCC region.
References


Maum, Rosie. 2003. “A Comparison of Native and Nonnative English-speaking Teachers’ Beliefs about Teaching English as a Second Language to Adult


