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## Turkish EFL Learners' Attitudes towards ELF and Standard English at Tertiary Level\* \*\*

### Yükseköğretim Düzeyinde İngilizce'yi Yabancı Dil Olarak Öğrenen Türk Öğrencilerin ELF ve Standart İngilizce Kavramlarına Yönelik Tutumları

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#### **ABSTRACT**

*In recent years, the term "English as a Lingua Franca" has been employed to indicate a way of communication in English between speakers with different native languages. When English became so widespread, different Englishes emerged in different parts of the world, and this brought up the question of whether there should be a Standard English or not. The purpose of this descriptive research study is to explore both Turkish EFL students' perceptions on English as a Lingua Franca and how their attitudes are shaped in terms of Standard English. The study was conducted with 173 English tertiary level students taking one-year intensive language course in school of foreign languages at two state universities. An online questionnaire was used in the study, which made it possible to collect both quantitative and qualitative data. In the analysis procedure, descriptive statistics were used for the first research question and for the second*

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research question; responses to the open-ended questions were analyzed through content analysis to obtain in depth the understanding of the views of participants. The results show that students are aware of the position and the value of English as a common language and that students have positive attitudes towards English.

**Keywords:** ELF, Standard English, Learner attitudes

## ÖZ

Son yıllarda, "Lingua Franca olarak İngilizce" terimi, farklı ana dilleri olan konuşmacılar arasında İngilizce'yi kullanarak iletişim kurmanın bir yolu olarak kullanılmaya başlanmıştır. İngilizce bu kadar yaygınlaşınca dünyanın farklı yerlerinde farklı İngilizceler ortaya çıkmıştır ve bu da Standart İngilizce olmalı mı olmamalı mı sorusunu gündeme getirmiştir. Bu betimsel çalışmanın amacı, İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak öğrenen Türk öğrencilerin İngilizce'nin bir Lingua Franca olarak kullanımına dair algılarını ve bu tutumlarının Standart İngilizce açısından nasıl şekillendiğini keşfetmektir. Araştırma, iki devlet üniversitesinde Yabancı Diller Yüksekokulunda bir yıllık yoğun dil eğitimi alan 173 üniversite öğrencisi ile gerçekleştirilmiştir. Araştırmada hem nicel hem de nitel verilerin toplanmasına olanak sağlayan çevrimiçi bir anket kullanılmıştır. Analiz aşamasında, birinci ve ikinci araştırma sorusu için betimsel istatistikler kullanılırken açık uçlu sorulara verilen cevaplar, katılımcıların görüşlerini derinlemesine anlamak için içerik analizi yoluyla analiz edilmiştir. Sonuçlar, öğrencilerin İngilizce'nin ortak bir dil olarak konumunun ve değerinin farkında olduklarını ve öğrencilerin İngilizce'ye karşı olumlu tutumlara sahip olduklarını göstermiştir.

**Anahtar Sözcükler:** ELF, Standart İngilizce, Öğrenci tutumları

## INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the term "English as a Lingua Franca" (henceforth ELF) has been employed to indicate a way of communication in English between speakers with different native languages (Seidlhofer, 2005). In fact, ELF has emerged from the globalization of the world and increased mobility which directly influenced language contact (Mauranen, 2018). Today, English is the leading language in various areas such as technology, economy and scientific developments (Graddol, 2000). Millions of people speak English when they encounter someone with a different L1 and to keep up with latest developments through English.

Due to the current situation of ELF, many studies have been conducted to anticipate the future of English. Since no language has ever been so common in history (Graddol, 2000; Mauranen, 2018), it is not certain what changes English will experience. Graddol

(2000) presents an overview about the future of English by discussing key factors which are influential in the process of ELF. In the review dated the year of 2000, Graddol states that the number of non-native English speakers will outnumber native speakers in ten years or so. It seems that his anticipation was correct because today English holds more speakers as second or foreign language rather than as first language (Mauranen, 2018). One of the potential outcomes of this direction might be that the authority of inner circle countries as native speakers will change as they become minority stakeholders in terms of English (Graddol, 2000; Yano, 2009).

Languages change across time and space to meet and adjust the needs of expressions and identities (Yano, 2009). The use of English as lingua franca has brought new items of vocabulary, linguistic forms and ways of speaking and writing (Graddol, 2000). Therefore, new words are added to English as it has started to be used in various countries with different traditions, beliefs and identities. As English has been used as lingua franca all around the world, different varieties of English have inevitably emerged which are referred to as “World Englishes”. The term *World Englishes* includes all varieties of English spoken around the world and highlights the plurality of English rather than focusing on one English as implied in other terms such as ELF and English as International Language (Kachru & Nelson, 2006). In other words, as Kachru (2009) asserts “we have *one* language and *many* voices”.

The emergence of World Englishes has undoubtedly brought some controversy with it. If there are varieties of English spoken by millions of people, then which one is the standard one? More interestingly, there are different varieties even in inner circle countries such as British English and American English (Yano, 2009). Hence, it is getting more challenging both for teachers and learners to decide which variety or form to adhere to as the representative of an ideal or standard one. There are different views toward using native speaker norms versus non-native speaker norms. For example Quirk (1990) claims that there are just two valid English varieties (British and American) which are referred to as standard. Additionally, Quirk (1990) argues that learners prefer native speaker norms rather than alternative models and he refers to

alternative Englishes as “half-baked quackery”. Likewise, non-native English alternatives have been called in different ways such as broken English, learners’ interlanguage (Grazzi, 2016) and reduced or simplified form of English (Jenkins, 2012). On the other hand, Kachru and Nelson (2006) argues that most global users of English do not desire to speak or write like Americans, British or Canadians. One reason for the tendency of non-native norms as well as native ones might be attributed to the focus on effective communication and being intelligible. In Lopriore (2015)’s study, the importance of meaningful communication is highlighted for learners’ success and self-confidence rather than correcting commonly regarded mistakes in L2 oral production.

As another key term in ELF literature, intelligibility plays a crucial role in effective communication. Jenkins (2000) presents a list of pronunciation priorities in an ELF context based on the data she collected from her students. She calls this list *Lingua Franca Core (LFC)* and aims to demonstrate which pronunciation features are crucial and which of them can be neglected for effective communication.

All in all, it is certain that English is a common language used globally and such a wide use has resulted in new discussions about the language. Related to different varieties of English used around the world, the issue of Standard English and ELF has become even more challenging. Nevertheless, it is necessary to consider learners’ attitudes toward ELF and Standard English. Learners’ attitudes are crucial since Mercer and Dörnyei (2020) highlights five crucial areas in language learning: learner needs, preferences, wants, current abilities and contextual factors. With this regard, the current study aims to explore attitudes of EFL learners toward ELF and Standard English. For this purpose, two research questions were formulated as follows:

1. At tertiary level, what are Turkish EFL learners' attitudes toward ELF?
2. What are Turkish EFL learners’ perceptions toward Standard English and native speakerism?

## METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

This descriptive, non-experimental research study adopts both a quantitative and a qualitative approach for two separate research questions. An online questionnaire was implemented to collect the data from the students of two different schools of foreign languages via Google Forms. The participants of this study were 173 English prep school students at two different state universities in Turkey who receive education at different proficiency levels (A2, A2+, English Language and Literature students). The questionnaire consisted of 3 different sections with a total of 45 questions; in the first part, participants' demographic data was collected through 5 questions; in the second part, there were 34 questions written on a 5-point Likert scale; and in the last part, there were 6 open-ended questions which let participants express their opinions on the issue being asked. The items in the second part of the tool were taken from an existing and reliable questionnaire (the scale of students' attitudes and beliefs about ELF, ELF communication and identity) which was used by Akçay (2020). Moreover, opinions and suggestions were requested from the experts to determine whether the open-ended questions are appropriate and comprehensive enough for the content of the study and the items were formed by taking the feedback given into account. The data of the first research question were collected from the second part of the questionnaire, and for the second research question, the data were obtained from the second part of it- through 6 open-ended questions.

In the analysis procedure, descriptive statistics were used for the first research question; Statistical package for the social sciences (SPSS) was used for the quantitative analysis as it is user friendly and various tests can be conducted using this software; and, for the second research question, a content analysis was carried out by making use of quotations taken from the data. To Corden Sainsbury (2006), including verbatim quotations from research participants has become effectively standard practice in much qualitative applied social research reporting. In our study, we used one of the three

quotation types defined by Creswell (2012; cited in Eldh, Årestedt and Berterö, 2020): discrete quotations. According to him, such quotations are easy to read and do not take up much space. They also allow many different views to be represented. Quotations also allow researchers to directly reflect the opinions of participants, thus reducing the possibility of data being open to interpretation and manipulation of the data. In order to collect qualitative data, 6 open-ended questions were added to the questionnaire, which was the data collection tool of the study, and the answers of the participants to these questions were transferred to a Microsoft word file in order to be able to evaluate them. Since the data were collected in Turkish, they were translated into English and the accuracy of these translations was presented to the opinion of two independent experts. The information in the Microsoft word file was both thematized and grouped using the MAXQDA qualitative data analysis program, and was also read, reread and detailed by the researchers in order to better process the data. By combining and expanding the findings obtained by both methods, the data were made suitable for content analysis. The 'bottom-up coding or inductive approach' technique was adopted in this study, as the researchers found it appropriate to obtain the themes arising from the collected data. The themes obtained by the two methods mentioned were combined, regrouped and rearranged to ensure consistency; researchers think that the maximum efficiency for analysis is obtained from the data by this method. Each open-ended question was analyzed by using the quotations of the participants under the determined themes.

**Ethical considerations**

Within the scope of research questions, both quantitative and qualitative data were required from the participants of the study. Hence, an ethical consideration application was requested from Bülent Ecevit University before collecting the data. After the data collection tools were examined by the committee, ethical approval form, dated 29.07.2021 and numbered 62448, was received and the relevant document is attached.

## FINDINGS

### Quantitative Findings

The quantitative data collected for this study were analyzed under the subcategories of the questionnaire. As one of the sub-factors of the ELF questionnaire, learners' confessed emotional beliefs about English were sought through item 11 and 31. The findings are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Emotional Beliefs about English

	Percentages					M	SD
	1	2	3	4	5		
Item 11. English is a beautiful language.	.6	2.9	5.8	45.1	45.7	4.32	.76
Item 31. English is one of the most important languages in today's world.	.6	1.2	4.6	38.7	54.9	4.46	.69

*1 = Strongly Disagree; 5 = Strongly Agree*

As can be seen in Table 1, learners were found to have positive feelings toward English with high mean scores (M=4.32; M=4.46). In other words, a great majority of students agreed on the idea that English is a beautiful language, and it is one of the most important languages in today's world.

**Table 2.** Functional beliefs about English

	Percentages					M	SD
	1	2	3	4	5		
Item 1. In today's world, one cannot get by without knowing English.	5.2	7.5	5.8	34.7	46.8	4.10	1.13
Item 4. English should be an obligatory subject at university.	4.0	11.6	14.5	28.9	41.0	3.91	1.17
Item 23. Studying English is important because I will need it for my career.	0	1.7	2.3	20.8	75.1	4.69	.6
Item 30. Correct grammar is important for me to communicate with foreigners in English.	6.4	17.3	13.9	39.3	23.1	3.55	1.2
Item 34. Learning English is a waste of time.	78.6	16.8	1.2	2.3	1.2	1.31	.71

*1 = Strongly Disagree; 5 = Strongly Agree*

Table 2 illustrates participants' functional beliefs about English. As can be concluded from the score of item 1 and item 4, participants are aware of the fact that English is a necessity ( $M=4.10$ ) and for this reason it must be compulsory at university ( $M=3.91$ ). What stands out in this table is that the item highlighting the importance of English in terms of future career (item 23) is given an incredible score ( $M=4.69$ ). In other words, 95.9% of the participants stated that English is important since they will need it for their career. In addition to why and with what purpose English is important, participants were asked about the role of correct grammar. As the findings of item 30 demonstrate, more than half of the participants (62.4%) asserted that correct grammar is important to communicate with foreigners in English. Eventually, the results of item 34 regarding the importance of English, show consistency with previous findings. Significant number of participants (78.6%) expressed that they disagree with the idea that learning English is a waste of time.



**Table 3.** Attitudes towards English Pronunciation

	Percentages					M	SD
	1	2	3	4	5		
Item 8. It is important to speak English with excellent pronunciation.	6.4	29.5	18.5	27.7	17.9	3.21	1.22
Item 12. I am happy with my English pronunciation as long as people can understand me.	2.9	13.3	25.4	38.7	19.7	3.59	1.04
Item 22. I do not think it is important to speak like a native speaker of English.	11.6	15.6	22.0	34.7	16.2	3.28	1.24
Item 27. You should not say anything in English until you can speak English correctly.	63.6	26.0	5.2	3.5	1.7	1.54	.87

*1 = Strongly Disagree; 5 = Strongly Agree*

As shown in Table 3, the participants have a moderately positive tendency of favouring excellent pronunciation ( $M=3.21$ ). Nearly half of the participants (45.6%) agreed that speaking English with an excellent pronunciation is important. On the other hand, more than half of the participants (58.4%) stated that they are content with their pronunciation as long as it is comprehensible. A similar conclusion can be achieved from item 22; half of the participants (50.9%) expressed that speaking like a native speaker is not necessary while only 27.2% of the participants disagreed with the statement. Finally, a great majority of the participants (63.6%) were found to completely disagree with the idea that English should not be used until one can speak it correctly.

**Table 4.** Beliefs about the speaker's own competence

	Percentages					M	SD
	1	2	3	4	5		
Item 6. I am happy with my present English pronunciation.	12.7	30.6	27.2	24.9	4.6	2.78	1.09
Item 21. I find it easier to read English than to speak English.	1.7	9.2	15.0	32.9	41.0	4.02	1.04
Item 33. I will never be able to speak English with a correct pronunciation.	27.2	35.8	22.5	11.6	2.9	2.27	1.07

1 = Strongly Disagree; 5 = Strongly Agree

From the data in Table 4, it is apparent that participants are not quite confident about their pronunciation and speaking competence while they are not completely desperate about their English competence. In item 6, participants are observed to be mainly concentrated on the scores of 2 (30.6%) and 3 (27.2%) which means that more than half of the participants are either unhappy with their pronunciation or indecisive about their competence. Moreover, findings of item 21 demonstrate that participants find speaking challenging when compared to reading skill (M=4.02). Nevertheless, a positive attitude toward future competence can be extracted from item 33, since participants disagree that they will never be able to speak English with a correct pronunciation (M=2.27).

**Table 5.** Attitudes towards ELF

	Percentages					M	SD
	1	2	3	4	5		
Item 3. Schools should teach English not as the native speakers speak it, but for efficient international communication.	4.6	4.0	8.1	39.3	43.9	4.14	1.04
Item 7. English does not belong to the native speakers anymore, but to anybody who uses it.	0	5.8	10.4	48.0	35.8	4.14	.82
Item 15. I would prefer it if the international language of communication were not English but my native language	4.0	18.5	22.0	26.6	28.9	3.58	1.20
Item 16. It is valuable for me if someone has the pronunciation of an English native speaker.	9.2	27.7	22.0	27.2	13.9	3.09	1.21
Item 19. Everybody in Turkey should speak English since this would facilitate worldwide communication.	7.5	17.9	21.4	33.5	19.7	3.40	1.20
Item 24. It is useful so many people speak English because this allows for easier communication among people.	.6	.6	4.6	39.3	54.9	4.47	.67
Item 28. We need to develop a global variety of English that is not linked to a particular English speaking country and that can be used everywhere.	6.4	7.5	20.2	39.9	26.0	3.72	1.12

1 = *Strongly Disagree*; 5 = *Strongly Agree*

Table 5 presents an overview of several issues related to ELF such as ownership of English, communicative competence versus linguistic competence and varieties of English. From the findings above, it is possible to assert that participants prioritize efficient international communication over speaking English like a native speaker (M=4.14). Likewise, a great majority (94.2%) stated that English is useful due to facilitating communication among people (item 24). In item 19, an average, slightly higher than moderate level (M=3.40) was found. Participants also highlight the usefulness of speaking English in Turkey for the sake of worldwide communication. As for the ownership of English, the findings of item 7 demonstrate that participants think that English now belongs to everyone who speaks it (M=4.14). In addition, a medium score was detected in item 16 which signifies that having pronunciation of an English native speaker has a moderate effect. Regarding the native speakerism issue, it was

found that more than half of the participants (65.9%) expressed the necessity of creating a new variety of English which is not linked to any particular country. So that English would be universal. Finally, participants tended to want their mother tongue to be the lingua franca rather than English (M=3.58).

**Table 6.** Attitudes towards ELF communication

	Percentages					M	SD
	1	2	3	4	5		
Item 14. I am not bothered about mistakes that other learners of English make as long as I understand what they want to say.	2.9	8.1	16.2	45.1	27.7	3.87	1.00
Item 20. Sometimes, I find it funny when people speak English with a strong non-English accent.	22.0	43.9	13.9	12.1	8.1	2.40	1.19
Item 26. A strong non-English accent complicates communication among people.	6.4	30.1	23.7	27.2	12.7	3.10	1.15

*1 = Strongly Disagree; 5 = Strongly Agree*

Table 6 illustrates attitudes towards ELF communication. As can be concluded from the findings of item 14, learners are not disturbed by other people's mistakes as long as communication is managed (M=3.87). In terms of non-English accent, it is obvious from the findings that learners find non-English accent normal (M=2.40). However, a neutral position with a medium-close score was observed in item 26 (3.10) which is related to the effect of a strong non-English pronunciation on communication.

**Table 7.** The speaker's identity

	Percentages					M	SD
	1	2	3	4	5		
Item 5. To me, English is more important than my mother tongue. (first language)	19.1	35.8	16.8	19.1	9.2	2.64	1.24
Item 9. If one speaks English, one also has to try to behave like the natives.	39.9	38.7	8.7	8.7	4.0	1.98	1.09
Item 13. English forms a threat to my mother tongue.	42.2	37.6	11.0	5.2	4.0	1.91	1.05
Item 17. Being able to speak English is mainly important because I want to be able to interact more easily with native speakers of English.	3.5	14.5	12.7	46.2	23.1	3.71	1.08
Item 18. Being able to speak English is mainly important because I want to be able to interact more easily with speakers who do not speak my language.	1.2	6.9	6.4	45.7	39.9	4.16	.90
Item 25. I do not like it when people recognize in my accent that I am not a native English speaker.	24.9	33.5	17.9	17.3	6.4	2.47	1.21
Item 29. When I speak English, I feel that I am a world citizen.	4.0	12.1	16.8	44.5	22.5	3.69	1.07
Item 32. I want to have a native-like accent.	1.7	9.2	7.5	34.7	46.8	4.16	1.02

1 = *Strongly Disagree*; 5 = *Strongly Agree*

As can be seen from the findings of item 5, learners do not ignore their L1 identity; more than half of the participants (54.9%) disagreed that English is more important than their mother tongue (M=2.64). In item 9, 78.6% of the participants disagreed behaving like natives when learning English. Furthermore, a quite low score was found for item 13 (M=1.91) which is about English's being a threat to learners L1. Learners expressed that learning English is important to interact with other people who do not speak their L1 (M=4.16) while a lower score was found for interacting with native speakers (M=3.71). Moreover, it can be seen from item 25 that learners do not bother when their accent is recognized (M=2.47). Accordingly, a positive high score was found for item 29 (M=3.69) which is about being a world citizen while speaking English. Although it was observed that learners are happy with their L1 identity and non-English pronunciation, they still expressed a desire to speak like a native speaker (M=4.16).

**Table 8.** Language Anxiety

	Percentages					M	SD
	1	2	3	4	5		
Item 2. I feel very much at ease when I have to speak English.	11.6	19.7	46.2	16.2	6.4	2.86	1.03
Item 10. Sometimes, I feel insecure about my English pronunciation when I have to speak in a group.	5.8	13.9	18.5	38.2	23.7	3.6	1.16

1 = Strongly Disagree; 5 = Strongly Agree

Table 8 illustrates learners' foreign language anxiety when speaking English. As can be understood from item 2, learners are not very much confident about their English pronunciation (M=2.86). Similarly, 61.7% of the participants expressed that they feel insecure about their English pronunciation when they need to speak in a group (M=3.60).

### Qualitative Findings

In order to obtain qualitative data in the data collection tool, 6 open-ended questions were asked to the participants. The first of these questions is "Is there Standard English in your opinion?" If yes, which country's language is Standard English?" While 69.79% of the participants state that there is Standard English, in the details of which language is standard English, about 38% see the language used in the USA, and about 31% see the language used in England as Standard English. The rate of those who say that there is no Standard English is 28.63%.

Those who state that Standard English is the English used in the United States generally give the following reasons: -it is more understandable, -easier to pronounce, and -those who learn English as a foreign language mostly prefer American English. Some of the quotations from the participants' reflections are given as follows:

*'The English spoken in the United States is Standard English. Because, English that is spoken in England is unique to them. People from other countries often try to learn American English.'* (p164)

*'American English is the standard for everyone, as it is more understandable, and words are pronounced better.'* (p10)

31.32% of the participants stated that the language spoken in England is Standard English. According to them, England is a very deep-rooted country in history and the language they use is an upper class language with certain rules and preferred in official institutions, and therefore it is the standard language. One of the participants emphasized that languages belong to nationalities and therefore UK English should be accepted as the standard language: 'Languages belong to nationalities, in which case English must also belong to the British ...' (p83). In order to illustrate the issue more clearly, answers of the participants are quoted below:

*'England is a very old and deep-rooted country. And it has certain rules about English, I think England.'* (p57)

*'I think an international language should be used in a standard way and that standard language should be the current English used by the UK.'*

More than a quarter of the participants (f= 28.63%) do not accept the existence of a standard English language. In this group, there are those who state that everyone has their own English, and those who state that every language used can be considered as a standard language if it is intelligible. Common opinions of the participants can be elucidated as in the following quotations:

*'..., but I do not think there is a standard for a language, language is a changing phenomenon like people.'* (p15)

*'...what they all have in common is that standard English... facilitates communication, minimizing confusion and ambiguity.'* (p48)

*'I do not think there is a standard English, if we can understand each other in a dialogue, this is the standard English...'* (p144)

The second of the open-ended questions allows the participants to express how they feel while speaking English with the people in front of them in 3 different situations. The

aim here is to understand the level of stress the participants experience when speaking English with a native or with someone they speak the same language or with people they share different mother tongues with. About 24% of the participants stated that they feel comfortable communicating in English with people they speak the same language, and about 7% of them stated that they feel uncomfortable or a little nervous. While about 17% of the participants stated that they feel uneasy when speaking with people whose mother tongue is different from theirs, 16% of them declared that they feel comfortable in communicating with them. In cases where they communicate with native English speakers, 25% of the participants stated that they do not feel very comfortable, and 11% stated that they are not anxious in this situation. When the answers given in 3 different situations are examined, we can say that the participants are less nervous when communicating with people who speak their own language (24% positive), that communicating with natives stresses them the most (25%), and the proportions of those who express positive or negative feelings when communicating with non-natives are very close to each other (16% and 17% respectively). The ratio of those who say they feel comfortable (2.11%) in all three situations and those who say the opposite (1.58%) is lower.

The following quotations can summarize the views of those who feel at peace when they communicate with people who speak the same language (same L1):

*'Speaking English with someone who speaks the same language as me makes me feel better. Because we have almost the same pronunciation. We do not have an accent. And that makes it more understandable.'* (p86)

*'...but I am more comfortable if the person I am talking to also speaks the same language as me. Because I think we will understand each other despite our mistakes.'* (p16)

The participants gave the reasons for feeling comfortable when communicating with non-natives: they usually go through the same language learning process, they do not



know each other, and they communicate with the same purpose -learning a foreign language. The following quotations reflect the general opinions of these participants:

*'Since they do not know me, I feel comfortable even if I make mistakes while talking.'* (p55)

*... because we are both trying to develop a language we do not know, so having the same goal gives a feeling of comfort.'* (p60)

When the answers given were examined, it was revealed that the most uneasy situation of the participants was talking to the natives. It can be said that the most common reasons are the fear of mispronouncing words and being judged, the fear of not understanding and not being understood, and feeling insecure. The following selected excerpts reflect the participants' common perceptions:

*'...I may get nervous because I think I will be judged, but unlike us, they care about expressing themselves.'* (p53)

*'...I think I feel bad because if I say something wrong I might get ridiculed.'* (p166)

Participants were also asked whether they prefer a native or a non-native teacher. Although the participants expressed the natives as the group they hesitate to communicate the most, when asked about their teacher preferences, more than half of them (pct. = 51.2%) stated that they would like to have a native teacher, surprisingly different from their answers to the previous question. When the participants were asked the reason for this, they suggested many reasons such as the natives have better pronunciation and accent, they teach the language better and they can also provide cultural information to students. The following quotations reflect the opinions of the participants:

*'I think it will be more effective in speaking English.'* (p56)

*'I like communicating with people from different countries or interacting with native English speakers.'* (p25)

*'...because language is not just words but also culture.'* (p7)

*'...teachers mostly convey the daily spoken language in a natural way. They focus more on speaking without giving much importance to structure and grammar. Nowadays, it is much more important that we can speak with foreigners, not grammar.'* (p48)

While approximately one third of the participants say that they prefer non-native teachers, the rate of those who do not express a definite preference on this issue and express their opinions from different perspectives is approximately 18%. Participants think that a teacher whose mother tongue is not English will be more aware of the stages passed while learning that language and it will be easier to communicate with them. They also state that if there is anything they cannot understand, this can be overcome by speaking their own language. The following statements might help us to see the reasons being expressed by the participants:

*'If I had a teacher whose native language was English, he might have had difficulty communicating with us. That's why I would choose a non-native English teacher.'* (p1)

*'I prefer a teacher whose native language is not English because I think they will understand me better. ... an explanation of both the meanings of the words and the rules.'* (p2)

*'... I think she will be more tolerant while we are learning English.'* (p137)

Those who do not clearly express their teacher preference (pct. = 18%) think that the important thing is not what the mother tongue is, but how the language is taught.

*'Actually, it does not matter which teacher, for me, how he teaches is more important.'* (p19)

*'...I think the way of teaching is important, not the mother tongue.'* (p60)

*'Since I care about the proficiency in the language, not the mother tongue, if the teacher's language level is good, the mother tongue does not have to be English.'* (p46)

Another open-ended question in the survey asks the participants to give their opinions on the following question: Do you prefer to speak English like a native or is it enough to be understandable? With the answers they gave to this question, the participants

revealed that speaking like a native is still important in the eyes of language learners (pct. = 35%). More than one out of every 3 participants emphasized the importance of native-like speaking. The following frequencies are that it is sufficient to be able to speak with small pronunciation mistakes with approximately 31% and communication is more important with approximately 26%.

The rate of those who say it is important to speak like a native is in line with the answer given to the first question: the participants believe in the existence of Standard English. The following expressions could be given as examples of participants' thoughts in this group:

*'It is important to speak like a native for business and career life, as being able to speak English like a native will put you one step ahead.'* (p126)

*'It is normal to have pronunciation mistakes at the beginning, but it is more important to speak with a perfect accent later on.'* (p100)

*'... If I speak a language, I want it to be perfect and error-free, I'm afraid of making mistakes and not being understood.'* (p21)

When the answers given by the other two groups are examined, the existence of common reasons draws attention. The participants stated that it would not be possible to speak native-like in a country where that language is not spoken, and that the important thing is to communicate with other people using English. If minor pronunciation mistakes do not affect understanding, we can say that they are not taken into account by the participants, based on the data:

*'...instead of wasting time on a perfect accent...If we can understand the other person within the communication rules or if he/she does not have trouble understanding us, I would say this is the perfect communication...'* (p43)

*'We can treat language as a tool for exchanging messages and ignore pronunciation mistakes.'*

The next question is whether learners of English need to be aware of the language as well as the cultures of the countries which speak that language. Most of the participants (pct. =71%) answered yes to this question, giving different reasons. The rate of those who said that this was not necessary remained around 17%. The remaining participants stated that this should be a reason for preference; or they were undecided. 3 participants, on the other hand, questioned which country's culture was mentioned, stating that English is no longer an international language, so it does not belong to a single culture:

*'...language and culture are inseparable from each other....I think English should be taught in a multicultural context as we cannot limit it to a single culture.'* (p38)

The participants, who think that while learning English, it is necessary to be aware of the cultures of native English speakers, attributed this to many reasons. The most expressed views are that language is an integral part of culture, and having knowledge about culture will facilitate learning and communication. The following quotes reflect the thoughts of participants:

*'...because language is not just learning words, the structures of the sentence and the way they speak show the culture of those people, their way of thinking and their way of life, that is, language is a reflection of a culture in itself.'* (p7)

*'...in terms of knowing what the language they use is influenced by.'* (p46)

*'I don't think it is possible to learn a language completely without learning the culture of that country.'* (p82)

*'Not to resemble them, but to acquire that language, its culture, history, etc. I think it is necessary ...'* (p109)

*'... because if you are learning a language, it is necessary to be aware of its culture and traditions.'* (p142)

*'... some sentences and phrases may not mean anything when they are translated directly. But the way of life can give meaning to them.'* (p50)

Those who do not believe that culture should be learned along with language stated that they do not think that there is a relationship between language and culture, that it is not beneficial to learn the language and that this knowledge can be obtained later if desired. They stated their opinions as in the following quotations:

*'I don't think it provides any extra convenience while learning the language.'* (p17)

*'Most people learn English for work, travel or something like that. Except for those who are not curious, I do not think it is very important to learn culture / tradition along with the language.'* (p150)

*'I think there is no need, it is enough to see language as a tool for communication.'* (p11)

In the sixth open-ended question, it is aimed to learn how the participants feel when English is used with different accents. A few examples are given to make it clear what is meant by the question. When the answers given to this question are examined, it is understood that the ratios of those who are satisfied with hearing different accents and those who are not are close to each other. While approximately 39% of the participants stated that they are happy to hear different accents, citing reasons such as being more understandable and making communication easier, the rate of those who stated that they are not satisfied, thinking that this might cause confusion, is around 32%. While 13% of the participants expressed that the language used should be understandable rather than accent, the rate of those who stated that they had no idea about this issue remained around 7%. The following quotations represent the common views of those who say they are happy with different accents:

*'Considering that English no longer belongs to a single culture or community and we need to talk about Englishes rather than just one English, I think the more different accents English students are exposed to, the better it will be for them. In this way, I think that they will feel more confident while learning and using this internationalized language, and their awareness of how important learning this language is in communicating with people from other countries will increase.'* (p38)

*'It can be beneficial for us to hear and learn how other people speak English with an accent.'* (p11)

*'The point I care about the most in the language is to be able to speak fluently and if someone has achieved that fluency before me... it also makes me realize the fact that I have a long way to go, which also triggers my development.'* (p43)

*'The more I hear, the better I will be.'* (p59)

*'...because differences are always beautiful.'* (p82)

*'...because different people from all over the world speak English with different accents compared to their own language, and it makes me very happy that they still understand each other.'* (p100)

The reasons put forward by those who stated that they would not be happy about this situation (pct.=32%) are that different accents make it difficult to understand English and they feel unhappy when they do not understand what is spoken:

*'American and British accents sound better.'* (p52)

*'It makes me feel insecure in understanding and speaking that language. Not being able to understand the accent makes me feel bad.'* (p107)

*'I am not satisfied. Because I cannot understand. Since it is an international language, I want it to be pronounced as it should.'* (p131)

*'I once tried to talk to a Russian speaking English before, although it did not bother me much at first, when we talked I couldn't understand it and I was uncomfortable. He was speaking with a completely Russian accent and his pronunciation was seriously bad so I would not be very pleased.'* (p48)

*'I am not very pleased because as a new language learner, when I come across different pronunciations, sometimes I do not understand them. And it makes me feel bad. It feels like I will never learn English and understand what is spoken.'* (p16)

It has emerged from the answers given that the important thing for 13% of the participants is not different accents, but the intelligibility of the spoken language. The following expression might illustrate how participants generally responded to this question:

*'I would feel neutral...Even Turkish has a lot of dialects. I would not bother as long as I can understand people in different countries speaking with different accents.'* (p54)

## **DISCUSSION and CONCLUSION**

The current study aimed to explore Turkish EFL learners' perception of ELF at tertiary level. From the questionnaire items, it was found that learners' emotional beliefs and functional beliefs are highly positive, and a great majority disagreed that learning English is a waste of time (95.4%). This finding is significant since positive feelings are important in shaping attitudes toward a language (Arnold, 2009). Positive attitudes toward English have been detected in several other studies (Akçay, 2020; Gömleksiz, 2010; Matsuda, 2000; Sağlık-Okur, 2016). In Gömleksiz (2010)'s study, positive attitudes toward English were observed with some meaningful differences in terms of gender, grade level and major. On the other hand, learners were explored to have negative attitudes toward learning English in Abidin et al. (2012)'s study. The reason why learners' attitudes toward English differ could be related to traditional teaching strategies (Al-Zahrani, 2008), identity issues, contextual factors, and ability beliefs (Busse, 2017). Moreover, the findings regarding functional beliefs about English revealed that learners attach importance to English mostly due to their future career plans (M=4.69). English has become a must in professional life since job applicants, interviews, and business contracts are mostly in English (Pandey & Pandey, 2014).

Regarding attitudes toward English pronunciation, it was found out that as long as communication is managed, learners are happy with their pronunciation (M=3.59), and they are not irritated by mistakes of other people (M=3.87). Similarly, most of the participants expressed that they would like to learn English for effective international

communication (M=4.14). These findings confirm what Jenkins (2006, 2007) and Breiteneder (2009) claimed which defines the ultimate purpose of language learners as conveying messages and negotiating meanings. However, most of the participants stated that they wanted to have a native-like accent (M=4.16). Participants expressed opinions supporting these findings in their answers to open-ended questions. According to those who say that speaking like a native is not a very important criterion; language is a means of exchanging messages and can be tolerated as long as pronunciation differences or mistakes do not hinder communication. Those who emphasized the importance of native-like speaking stated that this could be decisive for their career development and would help anyone to take a step ahead of other people in business life. As can be understood from these findings, although learners are aware of ELF and the importance of effective communication, they still desire a native-like pronunciation. This can be explained by the reality of native speaker model; native speaker norms have been accepted as the ultimate goal of language learning for non-native speakers (Jenkins, 2007). For this reason, EFL learners probably still assess their competences in accordance with native speaker norms.

The ideas that English is a threat to learners' own mother tongue (M=1.91) and the need to act like the natives (M=1.98) were disagreed by the participants. These could be supported by the following findings: speaking English to interact with non-natives (M=4.16) and feeling like a world citizen when speaking English (M=3.69). This complies with the findings of Akçay (2020) and Baker and Fang (2021) in which the learners were found to feel like a global citizen due to speaking English. In other words, EFL learners perceive English as a tool to interact with people around the world and they are not afraid of losing their own L1 identity because of English. As can be concluded from the results of item 9 (M=1.98) which is about behaving like the natives, learners are aware that they can protect their identities and cultures while learning English. In this vein, displeasure of recognition of learners' non-English accent (M=2.47) was found unimportant. This might be because learners believe that their distinct accent is a reflection of their own culture, and thus a reflection of who they are



(Booij, 2001). Therefore, more than half of the students (58.4%) indicated that they are not bothered when their non-English accent is recognized.

It has been accepted by a large majority, 71% of the participants, that it is not possible to separate culture and language from each other and that a person who wants to learn a language should be aware of the culture in which that language is spoken. To them, this will contribute positively to their language learning process. The shortest statement that can summarize the comments made about the need to learn culture as well might be the following: 'language is a reflection of a culture.' This finding is in line with various studies conducted in different countries and contexts showing that language learners have positive attitudes towards culture and culture teaching (Kahraman 2016; Rostami, 2016; Tran & Pham, 2018).

All in all, the results of this study showed that Turkish EFL learners generally have positive attitudes toward English and ELF communication. Although they desire a native-like accent, they still highlighted the importance of effective international communication. In addition, it was found that English is not seen as a threat to learners' mother tongue; rather they perceive English as a tool to reach people speaking different languages. Eventually, Turkish EFL learners were found to feel that they are world citizens through English.

### **PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS and LIMITATIONS**

Based on the findings, the study has important pedagogical implications. Although learners were found to have awareness of ELF and international communication, it is only at a theoretical level. ELF awareness should be reinforced in practice as well by informing learners about ELF concepts and non-native English standards. Obviously, this will require some adaptations in English language teaching in Turkey which has been mainly accuracy based. Besides learners, English teachers should also be supported to increase ELF-awareness and apply it in the classroom. It can be managed through integration of ELF in teacher training curriculums and effective teacher training

programs. As Graddol (2006) asserted that the changing status of English with an increasing number of non-native speakers obviously has an influence on both teachers' and learners' perceptions toward English. Hence, English language learning and teaching should be planned based on the contemporary situation and function of the language. In this vein, necessary revisions should be done not only at tertiary level but also at secondary and primary level education.

Inevitably, the study has some limitations in terms of sample size and data collection tools. Data for the current study were gathered from two state universities. For this reason, it is not possible to generalize the results to other contexts. Further studies could be conducted with more participants from both state and private universities. Moreover, the qualitative data were collected through an online survey and participants wrote their responses to the open-ended questions. In order to get deeper insights and more detailed answers, semi-structured interviews could be done with the participants.

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## GENİŞ ÖZET

### Giriş

Dünya çapında mesafelerin kısaldığı, uluslararası temasların hızla arttığı çağımızda ortak dil arayışı bir cevap bulmuş gibi görünüyor. Teknoloji, turizm ve ticaret vb. alanlarda öncü rol oynamaya başlayan İngilizce, iletişimi mümkün kılan en yaygın dil olarak öne çıkıyor. Son yıllarda, "ortak / geçer dil olarak İngilizce" (English as a lingua franca -EFL) terimi, farklı ana dilleri olan konuşmacılar arasında ortak bir iletişim dili olarak kullanılan İngilizce'yi tanımlamak için kullanılmıştır (Seidlhofer, 2005). Bu durumun ortaya çıkma sebepleri arasında dünyanın küreselleşmesi ve dil temasını doğrudan etkileyen artan hareketliliklerin ortaya çıkması gösterilmektedir (Mauranen, 2018). İngilizce'nin gelecekte bu konumunu koruyup koruyamayacağına dair çeşitli öngörüler yapılıyor olsa da kesin yargılara varılamamaktadır ancak güncel ve kesin olan şey İngilizce'yi ikinci veya yabancı dil olarak kullanan kişi sayısının onu anadili olarak kullanan kişi sayısını geçtiğidir (Mauranen, 2018). İngilizce diğer tüm yaşayan diller gibi değişmeye ve gelişmeye devam etmektedir. Farklı gelenek, inanç ve kimliklere sahip çeşitli ülkelerde ve topluluklarda kullanılmaya başlandığı için yöreye veya bölgeye özgü farklı İngilizceler de ortaya çıkmaya başlamış ve bu, standart bir İngilizce var mı yoksa olmalı mı sorusunu gündeme getirmiştir. Quirk (1990), standart olarak adlandırılan sadece iki geçerli İngilizce türünün (İngiliz ve Amerikan) olduğunu iddia ederken, kimi araştırmacılar küresel İngilizce kullanıcıların çoğunun Amerikalı, İngiliz veya Kanadalı gibi konuşmak istemediklerini savunmaktadır. Bu durum İngilizce'yi ikinci / yabancı dil olarak öğrenenler için olduğu kadar onu öğretmeye çalışan öğretmenler için de gittikçe karmaşıklaşan bir hal almaktadır: hangisi standart veya 'doğru' dildir? Küresel çapta benimsenen İngilizce için ortaya çıkan bir diğer tartışma konusu da İngilizce'nin sahibinin kim olduğudur. Bu konuda da farklı fikirler mevcuttur. Kimilerine göre İngilizce anadili İngilizce olanların, kimilerine göreyse o dili kullanan herkesindir. Tüm bu tartışmalar İngilizce'nin tüm dünyada ortak/geçer dil olarak kullanıldığı gerçeğini değiştirmemektedir. Bu çalışma da tüm bu tartışmaları odak noktasına alarak İngilizce'yi yabancı dil olarak öğrenen üniversite hazırlık öğrencilerinin 'standart İngilizce' ve 'ortak/geçer dil olarak İngilizce'ye' bakış açılarını öğrenmeyi amaçlamaktadır.

### Yöntem

Bu tanımlayıcı, deneysel olmayan araştırma çalışması, iki ayrı araştırma sorusu için hem nicel hem de nitel bir yaklaşımı benimsemektedir. Çalışmanın verileri iki farklı devlet üniversitesinin yabancı diller hazırlık okullarında öğrenim gören 173 öğrenciden çevrimiçi anket uygulanarak elde edilmiştir. Veri toplama aracı olarak 3 farklı bölüm ve toplam 45 maddeden oluşan bir anket kullanılmıştır. Birinci bölümde 5 soru ile katılımcıların demografik verileri toplanmıştır; ikinci bölümde ise 5'li Likert ölçeğinde yazılmış 34 soru yer almaktadır; son bölümde ise katılımcıların sorulan konuyla ilgili görüşlerini ifade etmelerini sağlayan 6 açık uçlu soru yer almıştır. Birinci araştırma sorusunun verileri anketin ikinci kısmında yer alan 34 maddelik bölümden; ikinci araştırma sorusunun verileri ise son bölümdeki açık uçlu sorulardan elde edilmiştir. Veri analizinde ilk araştırma sorusu için tanımlayıcı (örneğin, ortalamalar, yüzdeler ve frekanslar)

istatistikler kullanılmış; ikinci araştırma sorusu için ise açık uçlu sorulara verilen cevaplardaki alıntılardan yararlanılarak içerik analizi yapılmıştır.

### **Bulgular**

Çalışmanın amaçlarından biri İngilizce'yi yabancı dil olarak öğrenen öğrencilerin ortak / geçer dil olarak İngilizce'ye karşı olan tutumlarını öğrenebilmektir. Anket maddeleri analiz edildiğinde öğrencilerin oldukça olumlu olduğu ve büyük bir çoğunluğun İngilizce öğrenmenin zaman kaybı olduğuna katılmadığı (%95,4) sonucuna ulaşılmıştır. İngilizce telaffuza yönelik tutumları incelendiğinde, iletişim kurabildikleri sürece öğrenenlerin telaffuzlarından memnun oldukları anlaşılmıştır. Katılımcılar İngilizce'yi ana dilleri için bir tehdit olarak algılamamakta ve İngilizce'yi kullanırken başkalarının yapmış oldukları hatalardan rahatsız olmamaktadırlar. Katılımcıların standart İngilizce'nin varlığına dair ne düşündükleri de araştırmanın amaçlarından biridir ve verilen cevaplar analiz edildiğinde her 10 katılımcıdan 7'sinin standart İngilizce'nin varlığını kabul ettiği anlaşılmıştır.

### **Sonuçlar ve tartışma**

Katılımcıların İngilizce'ye karşı olumlu düşünceler beslemeleri bu dile karşı olumlu tutumlar geliştirmeleri açısından önemli ve değerlidir. Benzer sonuçlar başka çalışmalarda da elde edilmiştir (Akçay, 2020; Gömleksiz, 2010; Matsuda, 2000; Sağlık-Okur, 2016). Çalışmada elde edilen İngilizce öğrenme sebebinin etkili bireysel iletişim kurabilmek amacıyla olduğu sonucu da benzer çalışmalarda elde edilen sonuçlarla paralellik göstermektedir (Jenkins, 2006; Breiteneder, 2009). İngilizce'nin ana dil için bir tehdit olarak algılanmaması da Akçay (2020) ve Baker ve Fang (2021)'in çalışmalarındaki sonuçlarla örtüşmektedir. Aynı zamanda, katılımcılar dil ve kültürün birbirinden ayrılmaz öğeler olduklarını ve bir dil öğrenilirken o dilin konuşulduğu coğrafyalardaki kültürlerden de haberdar olmak gerektiğini dile getirmişlerdir.

**APPENDIX 1. Ethics Board Approval**

Evrak Tarih ve Sayısı: 29.07.2021-62448

Kurum Kayıt Tarihi ve Sayısı:05.07.2021 / 56388	Protokol No: 259
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27.07.2021



T.C  
ZONGULDAK BÜLENT ECEVİT ÜNİVERSİTESİ  
İNSAN ARAŞTIRMALARI ETİK KURULU KARARI

ÇALIŞMANIN TÜRÜ:	Anket
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KARAR:	UYGUN

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