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Addressing the (ELF)ant in the Room: The Views of Polish Teachers of English on English as a Lingua Franca

Abstract

Students' and teachers' attitudes towards English as a lingua franca (ELF) have been a fertile research area in recent years. Nevertheless, Polish in-service teachers' views have been neglected. The present study addresses this gap in research and examines the beliefs and attitudes held by a group of eighty Polish in-service teachers towards ELF. The participants completed a survey that consisted of quantitative and qualitative questions. The data were analysed using both statistical and thematic analysis. The results obtained in the study suggest that teachers' awareness and views on ELF are rather negative and distrustful. They mostly see ELF as a useful and necessary concept, yet continue recognising native pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary models as their teaching goals. The data also suggest that a gap in teacher education programmes exists as the respondents either do not know or do not believe that Outer Circle Englishes are legitimate native varieties. Teachers also retain stereotypical views on Polish and native accents, perceiving the latter positively and the former negatively. This paper strongly suggests that teacher education programmes in Poland should ensure students and future teachers are aware of developments in the field of English Language Teaching.

Keywords: ELF, Polish, FL teachers, Poland, FL teachers' attitudes, FL teachers' beliefs

1. Introduction

The use of the English language has become widely accepted both in academic and political discourse while simultaneously assuming the role of the common language among people of different native tongues. This phenomenon has resulted in a paradigm shift in English teaching and learning, with Graddol (2010) declaring that English as a global language means it is no longer a tool used to communicate only with people from English-speaking countries, but a language used in everyday life by an ever-growing spectrum of people. Such a shift has resulted in more interest in English as a lingua

franca (ELF) in applied linguistics (Jenkins 2007; Mauranen 2012; Seidlhofer 2004, 2009). Despite the controversies surrounding the definition and functions of ELF (Dziubalska-Kończak *et al.* 2008; Swan 2012; O'Regan 2014), it is currently broadly accepted as: "a specific communication context: English being used as a lingua franca, the common language of choice, among speakers who come from different linguistic backgrounds" (Jenkins 2009: 200). Therefore, ELF should not be considered a separate variety, but language use in a context where multilingual speakers engage in communication. Moreover, unlike other lingua francas, ELF researchers appear to agree that native speakers can participate in ELF communication (Cogo 2010). The question that takes centre stage in the ELF debate is whether native speakers (NSs), who currently constitute the minority in the English-speaking world should uphold their norm-providing power (Crystal 2003; Graddol 2010).

While there has been an extensive body of research conducted in the European context (*cf.* Seidlhofer 2020), the situation of ELF in Poland continues to be relatively neglected, with only a handful of studies on ELF perceptions and attitudes among students of English (Wach 2011; Niżegorodcew 2014; Mystkowska-Wiertelak and Bielak 2014; Szymańska-Tworek 2016; Szymańska-Tworek and Sycz-Opoń 2020) and, according to the author's knowledge, no studies conducted on in-service English language teachers.

The purpose of the article is two-fold: (1) to contribute to our understanding and attitudes towards ELF of Polish in-service teachers of English, (2) to identify and explore possible issues and misunderstandings that teachers in Poland may suffer from in relation to ELF. Through an administered survey, the present study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. Are Polish teachers of English as a foreign language aware of the ongoing debates concerning ELF?
2. What is the attitude of Polish teachers of English as a foreign language to English as a lingua franca?
3. What are the associations that Polish teachers of English as a foreign language have with native and Polish accents of English?

Implications for the present teacher training programmes that arise from the findings and further research suggestions are also discussed.

2. English as a lingua franca and language teaching in the world

Previous research into ELF in English language teaching has indicated alterations that should be introduced into existing pedagogies to re-evaluate how English is being used and better accommodate students' needs. It has been long argued that the native speaker model should be considered inappropriate (Matsuda 2003), and that teachers of English ought to focus on teaching English as an international language (Sifakis 2004). Such claims are supported by significant research advances made in the field, e.g., researchers have identified the critical pragmatic strategies that aid ELF communication more than adhering to native speaker grammatical or lexical norms (Cogo and House 2018). Additionally, it has been shown that the ability to pronounce a collection of vital sounds (known as *Lingua Franca Core*) influences mutual intelligibility more positively than speakers' proximity to native speaker pronunciation norms (Deterding 2013). Such developments in the field should be closely heeded as arguably it is

teachers' job to prepare their students for realistic situations, such as communication mostly with other non-native speakers of English (Sifakis 2009). Considering the developments above, Kiczkowiak (2020) argues that to help students become genuinely confident English language speakers, our English teaching materials and pedagogy should reflect English's global and intercultural nature. In a similar vein, Friedrich (2012) suggests that our teaching practice should be built on the assumption that students will encounter diversity and should be equipped to act accordingly.

Several studies have been done on teachers' and students' of English perceptions and attitudes towards ELF. The general trend among teachers seems to be their acceptance of the usefulness of ELF (Sifakis and Sougari 2005; Young and Walsh 2010) while simultaneously disregarding ELF as a valid approach to language pedagogy (Timmis 2002). Bayyurt (2006) investigated the attitudes of Turkish English language teachers and showed that, in general, teachers were largely unaware of the current global role of English and valued the native speaker English model and culture more. Kiczkowiak (2018) argues that distrust among teachers towards ELF is likely to stem from the fact that there is little awareness of ELF scholarship.

Contrary to teachers' beliefs, students appear to hold more liberal views of the English language. Peckham *et al.* (2012) explored Erasmus students' attitudes in Hungary and the Czech Republic. They demonstrated that their respondents were likely to challenge the dominant position of native speakers and native speaker English. Cogo (2010) investigated students' attitudes towards different L1 backgrounds at universities in the UK and discovered that they valued communicative effectiveness over 'correctness'. Tsou and Chen (2014) conducted a study investigating ELF perceptions among English as a foreign language (EFL) students and MBA students who used English as ELF in their classrooms. The former cohort proved to be more Standard English (SE)-oriented and hold negative attitudes towards ELF compared to the latter group, which perceived SE as a model while simultaneously appreciating the effectiveness of the ELF approach to communication.

Jenkins (2009) made similar observations as she noted that the longer her Erasmus students interacted in a multilingual environment, the more aware of ELF's communicative advantages they became. Notwithstanding such tolerant views expressed by university students, the results of the studies conducted on Polish students of English tend to be more conservative.

3. E(LF)nglish in Poland

As mentioned before, the only studies on the perceptions and attitudes towards ELF in the Polish context were conducted on English students of different specialities at different tertiary institutions. They will be reviewed chronologically to properly understand how Poland's research agenda pertaining to ELF attitudes and perceptions has advanced to date.

Wach (2011) initiated the line of research with her study on 1–3-year B.A. students at two universities in Poland. Notably, both institutions' pronunciation courses had different intensity. Additionally, the university that emphasised pronunciation more provided their students with a choice between studying Received Pronunciation (RP) and General American (GA). The other university's students were forced to take RP pronunciation courses. The main aim behind the study was to investigate English majors' attitudes towards ELF and NS pronunciation norms using a two-part questionnaire. The

results of the study indicated specific trends among Polish students' English. Both groups showed their preference for NS pronunciation norms and saw their potential in English language teaching and learning on lower proficiency levels. Concurrently, they were unsure of NS pronunciation in the multilingual setting and managed to see its potential disadvantages. A clear correlation between the intensity of pronunciation courses and attitudes towards NS and ELF pronunciation norms was also found. In general, the group with more pronunciation instruction tended to perceive NS norms more favourably and mostly disregarded ELF as a viable option. The other group was not so adamant about their views and expressed a more sympathetic attitude towards ELF in their language development and potential pedagogical practice.

Niżegorodcew (2014) conducted a small-scale qualitative study analysing students' answers in essay form. The study's aims were multi-fold, namely, to investigate whether students are aware of ELF, their attitude to the English language, whether they considered it a threat to their identity, and what their level of aspiration was as far as their proficiency in English was concerned. The results suggest that students had a general understanding of the ELF concept, if basic. They tended to perceive English as a language of opportunity, with a minority noting its negative aspects, such as the spread of corporate capitalism. Most respondents admitted to seeing NS proficiency level as their goal, with only a few suggesting that they would prefer to be perceived as non-native speakers.

Another study on ELF attitudes and perceptions held by English majors was done by Mystkowska-Wiertelak and Bielak (2014). They investigated 93 English philology students employing a questionnaire and four follow-up semi-structured interviews. The results indicated that the students were aware of ELF, yet they continued showing their preference for the NS model. The authors attribute a possible cause for such a situation to the fact that English language teaching methods and materials have yet to accommodate ELF. Such a stance is in line with Kiczkowiak's (2020) position. It is worth noting that students' NS-like command of English seems to be associated with pronunciation, not so much with other subsystems. The authors suggest that English majors should be allowed to set the NS model as their goal; however, they should be made more aware of ELF to ensure they are ready to communicate in multilingual/multicultural settings.

Szymańska-Tworek's (2016) study followed an explanatory mixed-methods design, which employed questionnaires in the initial stage, whose results were later explored by in-depth interviews. The study aimed to determine pre-service teachers' (1 and 2-year MA students) attitudes towards the English language, such as their perceptions of Inner-Circle varieties (Kachru 1985), their opinion on incorporating elements of non-native cultures into the English language classrooms, whether they would like to achieve native-like accent, and if they would be willing to help their future students master it too. The data indicated several trends and observations that should be considered alarming according to today's ELT standards. Only a negligible number of teachers were aware of Kachru's Three Concentric Circles of English Model. Despite a consensus among the respondents that their prospective students will most likely communicate predominantly with NNSs of English, they perceived NS-like accent as both their and their students' goals. Additionally, only about half of the participants were reported to be willing to incorporate cultural content from non-English-speaking countries into their classrooms. These results are consistent with a later follow-up study by Szymańska-Tworek and Sycz-Opoń (2020) on two groups of interpreting students from two universities in Poland, namely the University of Silesia and the University of Warsaw.

Thus, a conclusion that can be drawn about the ELF awareness among Polish students of English indicates that very little has changed over the last decade, with students' attitudes remaining relatively constant despite an avalanche of changes on the international ELT stage. Moreover, due to the lack of similar attitudinal studies conducted on in-service teachers, little is known about the potential shifts in teachers' mindset once they encounter the realities of today's ELT and their students' demands. Therefore, the present paper aims to bridge this gap.

4. Research Methods

4.1. Method

The data for this study of attitudes and awareness of ELF among Polish English teachers were collected through a questionnaire that included four separate sections. The initial section gathered demographic data such as gender, age, whether respondents are currently working as English language teachers, length of experience, length of stay abroad, whether and how they use English outside their workplace. Following this section were two research sections. Firstly, questions regarding attitudes to Inner and Outer Circle Englishes were posed, namely whether English from countries such as the UK and America or Nigeria and India should be considered native varieties. A decision was made to use examples of nations rather than Kachru's terminology due to previous research by Szymańska-Tworek (2016), which showed that students, who are potential teachers, may lack understanding of them. Finally, the section gathered open-ended data on teachers' perceived advantages and disadvantages of speaking with Polish and NS-like accents. Respondents were also asked to provide adjectives that, in their opinion, pertained to Polish and NS-accented speech. The second research section consisted of 24 Likert-scale type statements and questions. The respondents had to evaluate the degree to which they agreed with them on a 1 – 5 scale (1 - definitely not; 2 - probably not; 3 - not sure; 4 - probably yes; 5 - definitely yes). Both statements and questions mostly referred to ELF and English language education. The contact section was used to collect e-mail addresses from participants who were willing to participate in a follow-up part of the project. The questionnaire was administered in Polish as respondents should complete questionnaires in their L1 (Dörnyei and Taguchi 2010). Considering this language choice, the author translated all excerpts from respondents' answers into English.

4.2. Procedure

The questionnaire was created and administered via Google Forms. The author believes that it is a reliable tool that is widely recognisable even to infrequent internet users; thus, potential respondents were not alarmed by an obscure survey application. Ensuring that participants feel anonymous and safe was considered highly significant. The survey was distributed online using volunteer and snowball sampling procedures. The former refers to participants who reply to advertisements posted on the Internet. Moreover, all participants were asked to spread the questionnaire among the appropriate population. Data collection took place between October and December 2021.

Collecting survey data online raises the issue of informed consent. Nevertheless, following Cohen et al. (2018), the act of completing the survey was considered informed consent. However, to ensure this is the case, no partial data from the questionnaire was collected. Moreover, at the end of the questionnaire, the participants were asked to only send their responses if they felt safe doing so. The researcher took the utmost care to ensure that no demographic data that was collected could be used to identify participants.

Importantly, it should be noted that the purpose of the questionnaire was easily understood; therefore, following Baker (1992), respondents might have felt the need to give socially acceptable answers. Notwithstanding such a limitation, according to Garrett, Coupland, and Williams (2003), the anonymity provided by such an online tool lowers the social desirability bias.

4.3. Participants

The sample consisted of 80 respondents in total (Table 1). As far as the sample's distribution is concerned, most respondents were women ($n = 62$, 77.5%), between 35 – 45 years old ($n = 32$, 40%), employed as English language teachers ($n = 77$, 96.3%). Most respondents had seven or more years of teaching experience ($n = 55$, 68.8%) and a master's degree associated with teaching ($n = 48$, 60%). Importantly, an overwhelming majority ($n = 78$, 97.5%) claimed to use English outside of their workplace, with 35 of them (43.8%) reporting use of English with both NSs and NNSs to the same extent. Additionally, most respondents have visited an English-speaking country ($n = 63$, 78.8%), although the majority stayed there for a maximum of three months ($n = 42$, 52.5%). Finally, 82.5% of all respondents ($n = 66$) claimed to be familiar with ELF, and 52.5% of them ($n = 42$) claimed not to speak Polish-accented English. Finally, it must be noted that a decision was made that the participants who reported not being currently employed as teachers of English were included in the final sample since all three of them had teaching experience. Therefore, they might currently be in-between jobs and soon return to teaching. Additionally, a distinction between professional (bachelor's and master's degrees) and scientific degrees (PhD, D. Litt.) exists in Poland, and for this study, only professional degrees were considered. Therefore, some PhD holders might be found among respondents who reported having master's degrees; however, considering that the teaching profession does not require scientific degrees, the likelihood was small.

Table 1 Participants - basic data

Variable		N	%
Gender	male	18	22.5%
	female	62	77.5%
Age (in years)	18 – 27	13	16.3%
	28 – 34	22	27.5%
	35 – 45	32	40.0%
	45+	13	16.3%
Are you currently working as a teacher of English?	yes	77	96.3%
	no	3	3.8%
Are you currently teaching in Poland?	yes	77	96.3%
	no	3	3.8%

Variable		N	%
How many years have you worked as a teacher of English?	1	4	5.0%
	2 – 4	10	12.5%
	5 – 7	11	13.8%
	7+	55	68.8%
What is your professional title? (provide the highest obtained)	high school diploma	1	1.3%
	bachelor (teaching)	8	10.0%
	bachelor (non-teaching)	4	5.0%
	master (teaching)	48	60.0%
	master (non-teaching)	19	23.8%
Do you sometimes communicate in English outside your workplace?	yes	78	97.5%
	no	2	2.5%
If yes, who do you more often communicate with?	NSs of English	14	17.5%
	NNSs of English	30	37.5%
	both to the same extent	35	43.8%
	not applicable	1	1.3%
Have you ever been to an English-speaking country?	yes	63	78.8%
	no	17	21.3%
If yes, how long?	not applicable	17	21.3%
	0 – 3 months	42	52.5%
	4 months to a year	7	8.8%
	more than a year less than 3	8	10.0%
	more than 3 years	6	7.5%
Do you know what ELF is? (English as a Lingua Franca)	yes	66	82.5%
	no	14	17.5%
Do you believe you speak English with a Polish accent?	yes	30	37.5%
	no	42	52.5%
	don't know	8	10%

4.4. Quantitative and Qualitative data analysis

Statistical analysis was conducted using the IBM SPSS Statistics 27 package to analyse quantitative data. The choice was made to perform non-parametric tests due to the variance homogeneity of groups and the fact that Likert-scale type questions were used. In the case of two independent groups, a Mann-Whitney U test was used to measure their statistical differences. If there were more than two groups, a Kruskal-Wallis test was employed. If statistically significant results were present, an appropriate posthoc test was performed. This allowed checking between exactly which groups differences existed. Spearman's rank

correlation coefficients were used to check the statistically significant relationship between the variables in question. Finally, $p < 0.05$ was accepted as a statistically significant result.

As far as qualitative data from the survey is concerned; firstly, thematic analysis was performed based on Spradley's (1979) similarity and contrast principles. Secondly, quantitising of qualitative data was done, which, following Sandelowski et al., is a process: "commonly understood to refer to the numerical translation, transformation, or conversion of qualitative data" (2009: 208). Therefore, after performing thematic analysis, the themes subsumed under each were calculated; thus, qualitative data were converted into numbers, allowing for basic statistical analysis.

5. Findings

In this section, the study's findings are presented following the order of Research Questions to ensure clarity.

5.1. RQ1: Are Polish teachers of English as a foreign language aware of the ongoing debates concerning ELF?

RQ1 was answered mainly by analysing qualitative data from the survey, namely the question concerning the definition of ELF provided by the respondents; however, respondents' answers to questions concerning nativeness of Inner and Outer Circle varieties were also considered. Notably, even though 14 respondents (17.5%) claimed that they did not know what ELF was in the previous survey section, only 8 of them decided not to provide their definitions. The responses were categorised into two main themes: i.e., correct (basic or more advanced) and incorrect. Some other prominent themes were also identified and will be discussed.

Before the definitions of ELF provided by the respondents will be analysed, two results must be borne in mind. Firstly, when asked whether English varieties from countries such as England, the US, or Australia should be considered native varieties, 68 respondents (85%) answered positively, 3 (3.7%) negatively, and 9 claimed they did not know. On the other hand, when the same question was asked regarding varieties from Nigeria, India, or Singapore, 42 respondents (52.5%) responded negatively, 30 (37.5%) positively, and 8 of them (10%) did not know.

As can be seen in Figure 1, it is safe to say that most respondents are vaguely familiar with what ELF is; however, their understanding of the concept is rather basic ($n = 62$, 77.5%). Most define it as a universal language. A prominent trend that must be mentioned while discussing basic definitions is that most of them are communication-focused ($n = 44$, 70%), e.g., "global means of communication", "default means of communication". Additionally, nine tokens were subsumed under the theme of native speaker exclusion. As the name suggests, these were the responses that suggested that native speakers are not part of ELF, e.g., "English used for communication by people whose mother tongue is different (not English)". Only four tokens (5%) could be categorised as more advanced, for instance:

The omnipresent language that helps everyone communicate, whether native or not. In corporations, it is ubiquitous – often, a Pole writes to a Pole in English because they know that their emails may be sent to a non-native boss, which means that all emails must be in a language everyone understands.

Native speakers in corporations are even told to simplify the language - to use fewer phrasal verbs or idioms so that everyone can understand.

Six participants provided incorrect definitions (7.5%) such as, e.g., “English as a mother or main speech”, “mixed language”. Nevertheless, the incorrect definitions and the ones not given total 17.5% (n = 14). This number is the same as the number of respondents who admitted not knowing ELF.

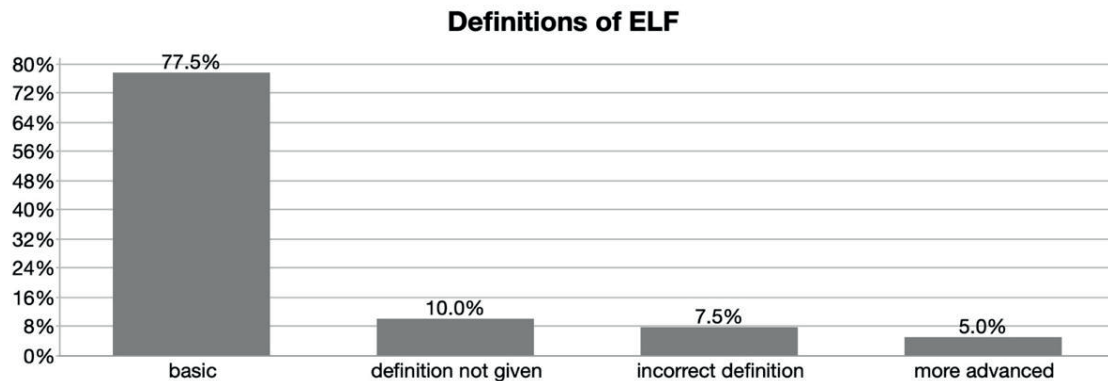


Figure 1 Definitions of ELF

5.2. RQ2: What is the attitude of Polish teachers of English as a foreign language to English as a lingua franca?

RQ2 is broad in its scope; therefore, numerous questions were used to assess the attitudes of Polish teachers (Table 2). The analysis of the results revealed that often respondents seemed to be confused by the concept of ELF as most of them (n = 57, 71.3%) reacted positively to the statement claiming that pronunciation instruction should be based on an NS model whilst simultaneously 90% (n = 72) concurred that it should focus on international communication (ELF). As far as teaching grammar and lexis is concerned, 77.6% (n = 72) supported the idea that it should also be based on an NS model, with only 20% (n = 16) willing to accept that NS models should be dropped for the sake of clarity in international communication (i.e., no third person singular -s or articles). Most respondents reported that the grammar and vocabulary (n = 64, 80.1%) together with the pronunciation (n = 62, 77.5%) that they were taught was supposed to teach them an NS model. Respondents seem to be also convinced that as teachers, they are supposed to have command of both standard grammar and lexis (n = 70, 87.6%) and pronunciation (n = 61, 76.3%). Interestingly, when it comes to the necessity of teaching students both NS grammar and vocabulary or pronunciation, respondents are slightly more likely to agree with the former (M = 3.79, SD = 0.910) than the latter (M = 3.49, SD = 1.114). Respondents are also under the impression that students want to be taught pronunciation based on an NS model (M = 3.89, SD = 1.114) and more uncertain about grammar and vocabulary (M = 3.62, SD = 1.060). Overall, it can be seen in the data that participants also believe that teaching ELF is necessary (n = 65, 81.3%) and useful

($n = 62, 77.5\%$). Notwithstanding these results, teachers remain unconvinced when stating that ELF is a worse teaching model than native varieties ($M = 3.07, SD = 1.251$). They are also unsure whether only NSs should have the right to decide the correctness ($M = 2.99, SD = 1.401$). Additionally, on average, respondents disagree with the statement that NSs should accommodate their language for international communication ($M = 2.75, SD = 1.326$). The overwhelming majority of participants also report that they prepare students to communicate with both NSs and NNSs ($M = 4.71, SD = 0.679$) instead of just NSs ($M = 2.89, SD = 1.253$) or NNSs ($M = 2.86, SD = 1.156$). Apart from the results above, the statistical analysis uncovered certain correlations and trends, and some of them seem to be worth investigating to provide a deeper understanding of the data and, in its wake, the situation of ELF in Poland.

Table 2 Likert scale data

	N		Mean	Std. Deviation
	Valid	Missing		
Teaching pronunciation should be based on an NS model	80	0	3.88	1.048
Teaching pronunciation should focus on international communication (ELF)	80	0	4.59	0.706
Teaching grammar and vocabulary should be based on an NS model	80	0	4.05	1.005
Teaching grammar and vocabulary should be based on ELF and focus on international communication (e.g., no third person singular or articles)	80	0	2.31	1.228
Grammar and vocabulary that I was taught were supposed to teach me an NS variety	80	0	4.31	1.038
Pronunciation that I was taught was supposed to teach me an NS variety	80	0	4.31	1.038
It is important for me as a teacher to have standard pronunciation based on an NS model	80	0	4.25	0.935
It is important that my students have standard pronunciation based on an NS model	80	0	3.49	1.114
It is important for me as a teacher to have standard grammar and lexis based on an NS model	80	0	4.53	0.811
It is important that my students have standard grammar and lexis based on an NS model	80	0	3.79	0.91
Usually, my students want to learn pronunciation based on an NS model	80	0	3.89	1.114
Usually, my students want to learn grammar and vocabulary based on an NS model	80	0	3.63	1.06

	N		Mean	Std. Deviation
At university were you under the impression that pronunciation will constitute an important part of your teaching practice?	80	0	3.61	1.297
Did your expectations pertaining to the importance of pronunciation instruction turn out to be true?	80	0	3.13	1.325
During your studies, did you have the impression that grammar and vocabulary would constitute an important element of your teaching practice?	80	0	4.46	0.885
Did your expectations pertaining to the importance of grammar and vocabulary instruction turn out to be true?	80	0	4.13	0.998
Learning English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) is necessary.	80	0	4.22	0.871
Learning English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) is useful.	80	0	4.2	0.92
ELF is a worse model to teach than native varieties.	80	0	3.08	1.251
Only native speakers have the right to decide what is and what is not correct	80	0	2.99	1.401
Native speakers should accommodate the language they speak for the purposes of international communication	80	0	2.75	1.326
I mainly prepare my students to communicate with native speakers of English	80	0	2.89	1.253
I mainly prepare my students to communicate with non-native speakers of English	80	0	2.86	1.156
I prepare my students to communicate both with native and non-native speakers of English to the same extent	80	0	4.71	0.679

The beliefs concerning pronunciation held by respondents appear to be a solid predictor of other convictions. The more teachers believe that pronunciation instruction should be based on an NS model, the more likely they are to report that e.g., teaching grammar and vocabulary should follow an NS model ($r = 0.751$; $p < 0.001$); students should have command of standard pronunciation ($r = 0.475$; $p < 0.001$) together with standard grammar and vocabulary ($r = 0.465$; $p < 0.001$); ELF is a worse model to teach than standard ones ($r = 0.433$; $p < 0.001$). Furthermore, the more respondents claimed that as teachers they should have an NS-based accent, the more they were likely to report that, e.g., grammar and vocabulary instruction ($r = 0.475$; $p < 0.001$) and pronunciation ($r = 0.421$; $p < 0.001$) instruction should focus on an NS model. Additionally, they were more likely to claim that it is important for their students to have NS-based pronunciation ($r = 0.493$; $p < 0.001$). Interestingly, the more respondents

believe that teaching pronunciation should focus on ELF, the more likely they are to report that they prepare their students to communicate with both NSs and NNSs ($r = 0.413$; $p < 0.001$). Additionally, the group of respondents who claim that their English is not Polish-accented is more likely to report that pronunciation instruction should focus on an NS model ($p = 0.01$), it is important for them as teachers to have standard NS pronunciation ($p = 0.002$), and they prepare their students to communicate mainly with NSs ($p = 0.019$).

Length of stay in an English-speaking country seems to be a valuable indicator of beliefs held by respondents. Quite surprisingly, teachers who have not been to an English-speaking country are more likely to claim that they teach their students to communicate primarily with native speakers of English ($U = 301.0$; $p = 0.005$). When a closer look at the correlations between different lengths of stay was taken, this finding was confirmed by the fact that teachers who have never been to an English-speaking country were more likely to believe that they primarily prepare students to communicate only with NSs than respondents who travelled to such countries for a maximum of three months ($p = 0.006$). Interestingly, it appeared that teachers who stayed in an English-speaking country for up to three months were more likely to believe that teaching ELF is useful than respondents whose stay was between one to three years ($p = 0.03$).

5.3. RQ3: What are the associations that Polish teachers of English as a foreign language have with native and Polish accents of English?

RQ3 will be answered using the qualitative data collected. Four open-ended questions were posed in the survey concerning teachers' attitude to Polish- or native-accented English. Firstly, the respondents were asked to enumerate the advantages and disadvantages of Polish teachers of English having either Polish or native English accents. Then, their task was to list adjectives describing both Polish- and native-accented speech in general.

5.3.1. Advantages and disadvantages of Polish-accented English

Seventy-three tokens were collected and subsumed under six themes: authenticity, improved pedagogy, cultural enrichment, improved intelligibility, identity, and no advantages. As Figure 2 shows, the most frequently collected tokens indicate that Polish-accented English among teachers has no potential advantages, with 32.9% ($n = 24$) of the respondents claiming so. Improved intelligibility came second with 27.4% ($n = 20$). However, an important detail that needs to be mentioned is that most respondents indicated that Polish-accented English has a positive impact on communication with other NNSs, e.g., "being understood by non-native English speakers", "better understanding between people from Eastern Europe", or "it is an accent that is understandable for the majority". Eighteen tokens were subsumed under the category of identity, with most of its respondents underscoring the importance of being recognised as Polish, e.g., "we show our national identity, we're not ashamed of where we come from", "other Poles know you're Polish", "nobody will take me for a Brit". Other themes were much smaller, with improved pedagogy generating 8.2% ($n = 6$), cultural enrichment 5.5% ($n = 4$), and authenticity 1.4% ($n = 1$). Nevertheless, it is important to point out that most tokens suggesting pedagogical advantages overlapped

with improved intelligibility, e.g., “ironically, our students can understand us better”, or “it is easier for students to focus on the message”.

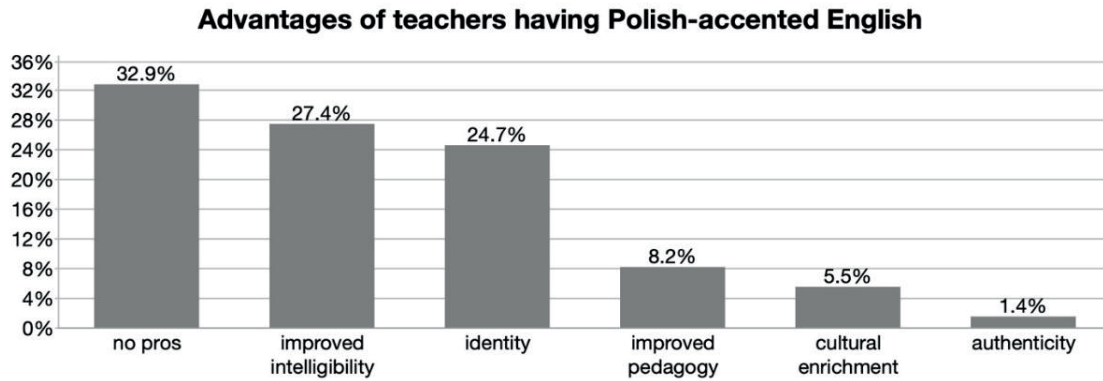


Figure 2 Advantages of teachers having Polish-accented English

A total of 74 tokens was collected regarding the perceived disadvantages of Polish teachers of English using Polish-accented English (Figure 3). Subsequently, seven themes emerged, with lowered intelligibility being the largest (32.4%, $n = 24$). Many of those tokens suggest potential comprehension issues and communication breakdowns with NSs of English, e.g., “English people can’t understand, so it’s a problem”, “issues with communication, misunderstandings outside of the Polish context”, or “I’m not always understood by native speakers”. Many respondents also suggest that the credibility of teachers is threatened if they have Polish-accented English, with 21.6% ($n = 16$) tokens indicating this trend, e.g., “it doesn’t sound professional for a teacher”, “mistrust of my interlocutors”, or “being seen as a person who’s stupider, less educated”. Identity-related disadvantages consist of 10 tokens (13.5%). Surprisingly, 4 of them pertain to being mistakenly taken for a Slavic person from a different Slavic country than Poland, for instance, “you’re taken for a Russian everywhere”. Worse pedagogy was also hinted at by nine tokens (12.2%), and they mostly referred to students’ exposure to incorrect accents, e.g., “there is a risk of teaching incorrect pronunciation”, or “incorrect pronunciation model”. Only 9.5% of tokens claimed there were no disadvantages ($n = 7$). Five tokens (6.8%) indicated that speakers of Polish-accented English might encounter prejudice, e.g., “discrimination”, “it can cause prejudice, especially when in contact with native speakers who have anti-immigrant beliefs”. The smallest theme consisted of 3 tokens (4.1%), and its name indicates the sentiment behind them, i.e., Polish-accented English simply sounds bad, e.g., “some people say it hurts their ears”.

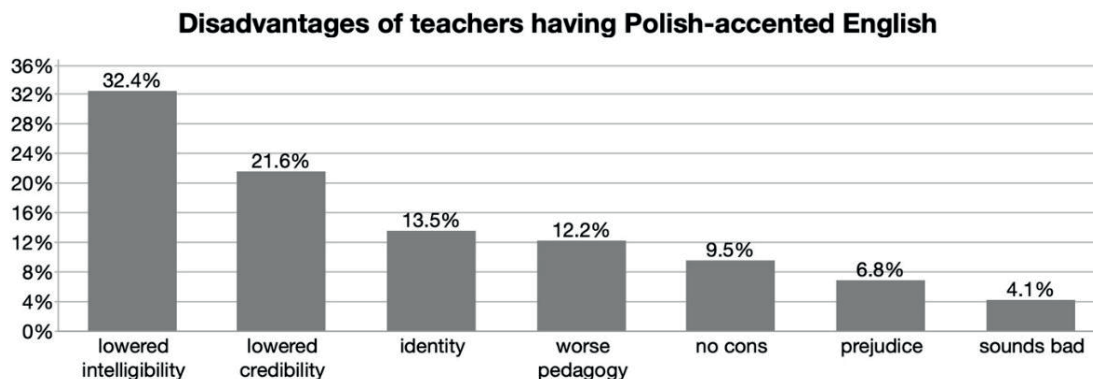


Figure 3 Disadvantages of teachers having Polish-accented English

Overall, both advantages and disadvantages generated a similar number of tokens. Nevertheless, most tokens collected in the case of advantages of Polish teachers of English having a Polish accent indicated none. Therefore, despite its potential advantages listed in the survey, Polish-accented English has a rather negative opinion among teacher respondents.

5.3.2. Advantages and disadvantages of native-accented English

A total of 90 tokens was generated, and eight themes were identified as far as potential advantages of Polish teachers of English having a native English accent were concerned. As evident from Figure 4, improved credibility seems to be most frequently mentioned by respondents, with 21 tokens (27.8%), e.g., “people respect you more”, “trust from your interlocutors”, “I think we’re taken more seriously”, “we’re seen as more intelligent”. Following credibility, intelligibility comes in second (23.3%, $n = 21$). However, importantly, it seems to mostly refer to being understood by native speakers of English, e.g., “better communication with native speakers”, “you can communicate with native speakers of English without any problems”. “you’re better understood by native speakers”. Tokens related to identity totalled 14.4% ($n = 13$), with most of them showing teachers’ unwillingness to be recognised for their nationality. Some respondents expressed their eagerness to blend in and be seen as an NS, e.g., “you can pretend to be a native English person”, “we can just blend in”, “you can pass as a foreigner”. Some responses also suggested that native-like accent is a sign of successful language attainment (11.1%, $n = 10$); for instance, “it’s a sign of a high command of English”, “it also shows a better command of English”. Prestige stemming from having a native-like accent appeared in 8 responses (8.9%), and improved pedagogy only in 6 (6.7%), and mostly referred to better pronunciation instruction, e.g., “I can teach my students to speak like this”, “very good pronunciation model”. Lastly, teachers mentioned more work opportunities for people with native-like accents (4.4%, $n = 4$) and that native accents sound more natural (3.3%, $n = 3$).

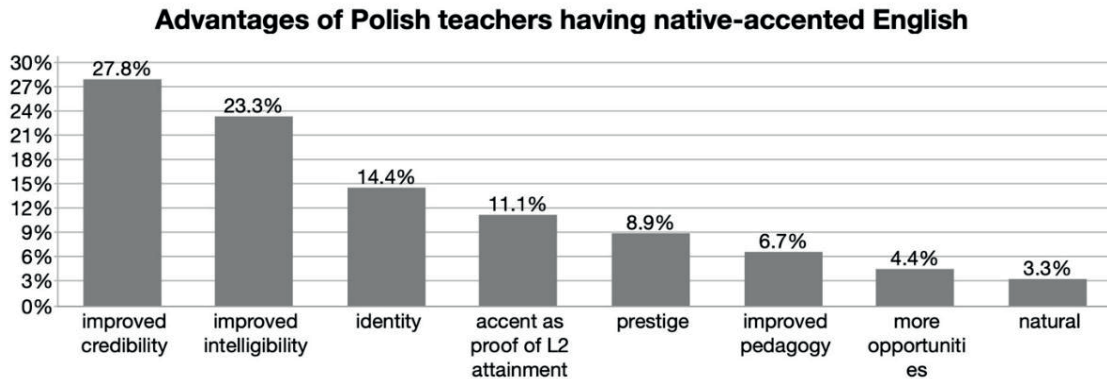


Figure 4 Advantages of teachers having native-accented English

As far as disadvantages of Polish teachers of English having native-like accents are concerned, 69 tokens in total were collected and subsumed under seven separate themes (Figure 5). Seemingly unsurprisingly, the most prominent theme consists of responses arguing that there were no disadvantages (50.7%, $n = 35$). Lowered intelligibility was mentioned by 15.9% of the tokens ($n = 11$) and mostly pertained to other Polish people who might have potential comprehension problems, e.g., “it can be difficult to understand for Poles”. Similar reasons were listed in the theme of worse pedagogy (7.2%, $n = 5$), i.e., “students often don’t understand when you’re trying to tell them”. 6 tokens (8.7%) claimed that it sounded artificial for non-native teachers to speak like this, and 5.8% ($n = 4$) believed that it could threaten their Polish identity. Two remaining and evenly distributed themes (5.8%, $n = 4$) referred to the difficulty of learning and maintaining a native-like accent and lowered credibility due to higher expectations that are hard to meet.

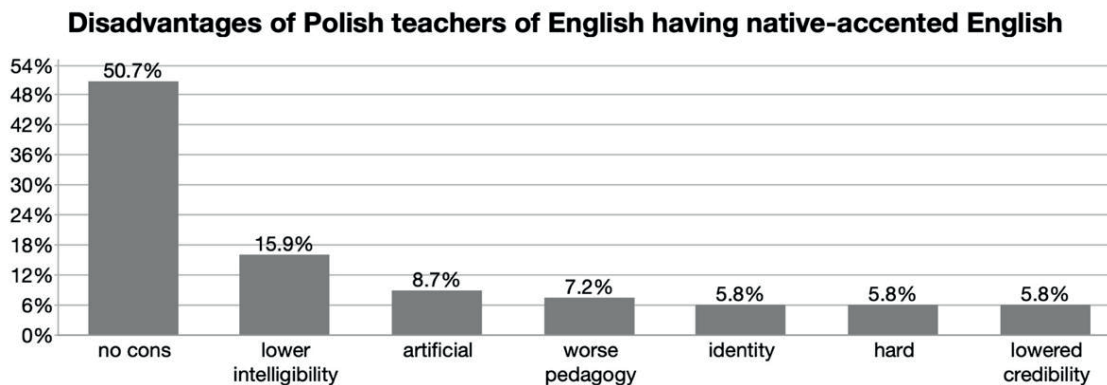


Figure 5 Disadvantages of teachers having native-accented English

5.3.3. Associations with Polish-accented English

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The question regarding adjectives that can describe Polish-accented English generated 113 tokens in total, later classified into three themes, namely positive, negative, and neutral. As shown in Figure 6, teacher respondents mostly had negative associations with a said accent, with 70.8% ($n = 80$) of tokens. Some of the most frequently mentioned adjectives were harsh, incorrect, and sloppy. On the other hand, positive adjectives attributed to 20.4% of the tokens ($n = 23$), and the most frequently mentioned ones were easy and understandable. There were 8.8% ($n = 10$) of neutral adjectives, with the top one simply stating “non-native”, although it is not certain whether such a statement is truly neutral.

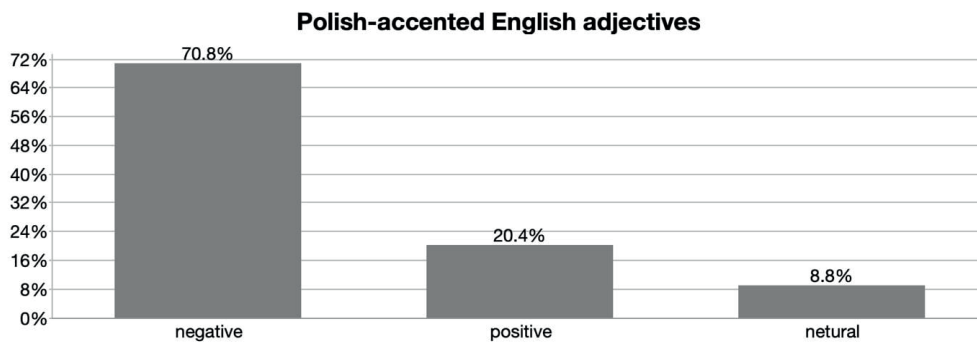


Figure 6 Polish-accented English adjectives

5.3.4. Associations with native-accented English

As far as associations with native-accented English were concerned, a total of 158 tokens was collected, with teacher respondents having overwhelmingly positive connotations (82.9%, $n = 131$) (Figure 7). Some of the most frequently listed positive adjectives were melodic, correct, and professional. Only 12.7% ($n = 20$) tokens could be classified as unfavourable, with the most repeated ones being stiff, artificial, and snobbish. Seven tokens (4.4%) were categorised as neutral, e.g., “native”, “normal”, “typical”.

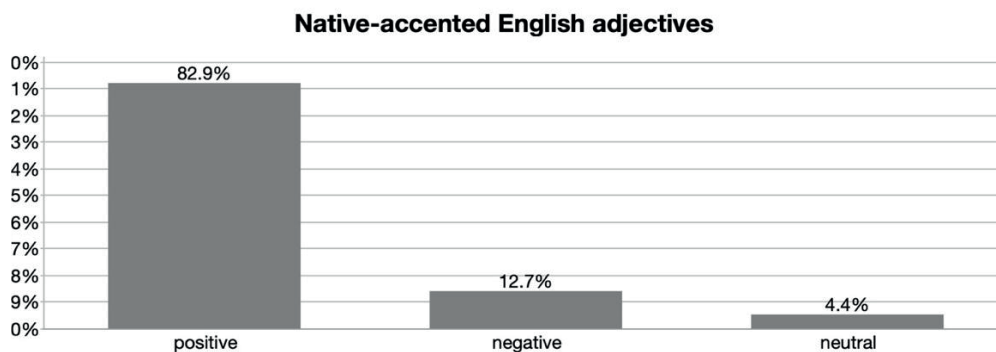


Figure 7 Native-accented English adjectives

6. Discussion

The current study explored attitudes and beliefs held by Polish teachers of English regarding ELF and embarked on answering three research questions: (1) Are Polish teachers of English as a foreign language aware of the ongoing debates concerning ELF? (2) What is the attitude of Polish teachers of English as a foreign language to English as a lingua franca? (3) What are the associations that Polish teachers of English as a foreign language have with native and Polish accents of English?

As in the case of Polish students of English reported by Szymańska-Tworek (2016), Polish teachers of English seem to be mostly unaware of the idea of Kachru's Concentric Circles. This became evident as more than half of the respondents claimed that varieties of English from countries such as India, Singapore, and Nigeria cannot be considered native. This result shows a significant gap in teachers' knowledge as it must be much harder to comprehend ELF without a basic grasp of World Englishes. Nevertheless, Polish teachers of English seem to have an overall basic understanding of what ELF is, mostly seeing it as a language used for international communication, with very few problematising it and seeing it as a more complex phenomenon. Additionally, it is problematic that some teacher respondents reported that ELF is a form of an international language spoken exclusively between non-native speakers. These two results are virtually identical to the ones reported by Szymańska-Tworek (2016) and Szymańska-Tworek and Sycz-Opóń (2020). It is also evident that teachers appear to be confused about the reality of ELF as they simultaneously believe that teaching pronunciation should focus both on international communication and an NS model. Nevertheless, such a general understanding may be a positive sign that ELF awareness is also growing among in-service teachers. First studies on students showed that as many as 35% were unaware of ELF (Szymańska-Tworek 2013 as cited in Szymańska-Tworek 2016). Later, Szymańska-Tworek (2016) showed increased student awareness, with only 15.3% claiming not to be familiar with the concept. In the present study, only 17.5% of teachers were wholly unacquainted with the idea of ELF. Notwithstanding such growing awareness, teachers' attitudes towards ELF continue to be unfavourable as teachers continue to believe that NS models are more valid.

The results obtained in the present study seem to align with studies such as Sifakis and Sougari 2005; Young and Walsh 2010, Timmis 2002. Teachers generally recognise the usefulness of ELF and the necessity to teach it yet fail to recognise it as a valid approach to language pedagogy. It is also concerning that teachers do not believe that native speakers should accommodate to aid international communication. The correlations found between attitudes to pronunciation instruction and ELF seem to corroborate Wach's (2011) findings. Overall, the more teachers believed in NS norms in pronunciation, the less likely they were to be ELF proponents. The length of stay in an English-speaking country, as found in Llurda (2010), Szymańska-Tworek (2016) and Paciorkowski (2022), proved to be an indicator of views held by teachers. It appears that teachers who have never been to an English-speaking country may be unaware of today's position of the English language. Owing to this, they tend to prepare students mainly to communicate with NSs.

On the other hand, teachers who spent up to three months in such countries seem to be aware of the reality of international communication. Nevertheless, respondents who resided in an English-speaking country between 1 to 3 years are less likely to support ELF. This may be because the former group could spend more time in an international group, whereas the latter could live with and accommodate to the native population.

It is also clear from the data that Polish teachers overwhelmingly value other teachers having native-like accents and mostly see no disadvantages in this. They also firmly believe that having such accents significantly improves their credibility and trustworthiness. It is also important to note that it appears that Polish teachers continue to care about potential comprehension issues that native speakers might have with non-native accents. It is especially interesting because many native accents are difficult to understand, even for other native speakers and Deterding's (2013) results show that LFC causes fewer comprehension issues than NS norms. Yet, according to previously mentioned results, teacher respondents mostly disagree that native speakers should accommodate their language for international communication. Therefore, they continue to believe that non-native speakers are responsible for successful communication with native speakers. Moreover, Polish teachers of English hold overwhelmingly negative views of Polish-accented English. This is in line with Szymańska-Tworek's (2016), Szymańska-Tworek and Sycz-Opoń's (2020), and Paciorkowski's (2022) results. Such animosity is even more striking considering that only 52.5% of respondents ($n = 42$) claim not to have a Polish accent. Nevertheless, acts of self-discrimination among NNS teachers are well-attested in literature, e.g., Reves and Medgyes (1994), Árvai and Medgyes (2000), Bernat (2008), Llundu (2009).

7. Conclusions and suggestions for further research

The present study's focus was to bridge an existing gap in the knowledge concerning attitudes to ELF among teachers of English in Poland as they have been neglected, with only a handful of studies conducted on Polish students of English to date. Three research questions were asked to guide the research process, and they were answered successfully. Polish teachers have a basic understanding of ELF and continue to be confused by the concept. They appear to recognise it as a valuable and necessary concept yet, at the same time, fail to see its pedagogical merit. Additionally, they maintain negative attitudes towards Polish-accented speech whilst at the same time mostly seeing no issues with NS models of pronunciation.

Based on the results of this and past studies, we can notice that students and later teachers do not receive enough information concerning current debates and developments in the field of ELT as they continue holding onto old-fashioned attitudes and beliefs. This situation needs to be changed as, following Seidlhofer from over two decades ago, ELF is "the most extensive contemporary use of English worldwide" (2001: 133). Therefore, teacher training programmes should include a Global Englishes component that could raise future teachers' awareness of current critical issues within the field, e.g., ELF, GELT (Rose and Galloway 2019) or native speakerism (Holliday 2006). Such pedagogical intervention could help teachers become more accepting of themselves and others in today's multilingual reality as it appears that teachers are likely to question their long-held beliefs upon questioning and reflection (Paciorkowski 2022).

Finally, it must also be borne in mind that the present study was not free of shortcomings. Firstly, the sample size of 80 teachers is not enough to confidently generalise the results; therefore, a larger research project could help us see more patterns. Moreover, very little qualitative data can be obtained from such surveys; thus, proper qualitative research should be conducted to shed more light on the results.

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