

Embracing Linguistic Influentialism: A New Conceptual Approach in EIL

Zahra Sadat Roozafzai

ACECR Institute of Higher Education, Isfahan, Iran

Email: zahra80r@gmail.com

KEYWORDS

Linguistic Imperialism,
Linguistic Influentialism,
Diffusionism, Democracy

ABSTRACT

Undoubtedly, English serves as the primary language for global interaction, business, globalization, trade, and mass media. It is now widely recognized as an international language rather than being considered the exclusive domain of the English-speaking world. In this context, the concept and conceptual approach of Linguistic Influentialism can be introduced as a substitute for Linguistic Imperialism. Influentialism does not deny the hegemonic influence of the English language, which results from its pervasive global use. Instead, Influentialism emphasizes all aspects of English's influence, which stem from the language's diffusion. Additionally, to address the sense of guilt and anxiety English language instructors may feel about potentially acting as ambassadors of linguistic and cultural imperialism or colonialism, the current study reviewed the concepts of norms and standards and their impact on English Language Teaching and Learning (ELTL). Drawing from diffusionism, semantic lexicology, psychology, ecology, biology, and microbiology, the research aimed to establish a multidisciplinary understanding of English's 21st-century reality and propose a new conceptual framework. The study aimed to demonstrate how a Linguistic Influentialism conceptual framework can replace Linguistic Imperialism in English as an International Language (EIL) context, as suggested by Seidlhofer (2011). So, employing a mixed-methods approach, including qualitative and quantitative surveys and interviews with English language instructors and learners, the study concluded that drawing from other disciplines can lead to a more appropriate, adapted, and acceptable approach through Influentialism. This approach can supplant Imperialism and Colonialism in English Language Teaching and Learning.

ARTICLE INFO.

Article type: Original article

Article history:

Received: 10 November 2024

Revised: 13 December 2024

Accepted: 07 January, 2025

Published online: 22 January 2025

Introduction

The language policy matters between 1988 and 1995, documented by Hedge and Whitney (1996), largely center around the global dominance of English and the part played by English Language Teaching (ELT) professionals in this arena. Teaching English as a second or foreign language can be regarded as a complex and challenging endeavor that requires significant time and effort (Kashef & Barzegari Kahrizi, 2023). However, it must be noted that the prominence of English as an international language is not the consequence of any one person, society, or governing body, but rather the demand for worldwide communication in the 21st century. A multitude of economic, socio-cultural, historical, and political influences have contributed to the adoption and use of English as a common language. This research does not seek to examine the reasons for English being selected over other languages, but rather delves into varying perspectives on linguistic and cultural imperialism and colonialism.

How to Cite: Roozafzai, Z. S. (2025). Embracing Linguistic Influentialism: A New Conceptual Approach in EIL. *International Journal of Practical and Pedagogical Issues in English Education*, 3(1), 17-36.
DOI: 10.22034/IJPIE.2025.488029.1063



© The Author(s).

Contrary to the imperial and colonial view in the socio-economic and political sciences, which defines imperialism as the hegemony and monopoly of power and colonialism as the extension of power exploitation, the globalization of the English language has shifted ownership away from the United States of America (USA) and the United Kingdom (UK). As the users of a product are its true owners, so with international and national users of the English language, the USA and UK no longer hold a monopoly over it. While they may have originated the English language, they do not control its development. New users around the world with different ecologies and communities now hold power and rights to the English language.

Kachru (1985) described the “Inner”, “Outer”, and “Expanding” circles of the three concentric circle model of World Englishes as 'norm-providing', 'norm-dependent', and 'norm-developing'. The native English speakers' language and culture serve as the center of these circles, but as the English language expands in academic, organizational, and business settings, the system should shift from a norm-referenced to a criterion-referenced approach. The original norms should be transformed into dynamic criteria to facilitate effective communication in various human ecologies and communities worldwide.

By sticking to the original norms instead of adopting developmental criteria, the English language teaching and learning (ELTL) system may perpetuate socio-economic and political English linguistic imperialism and colonialism. However, redefining imperialism and colonialism in other disciplines could lead to significant changes in the understanding of these concepts, which will be explored in the following sections.

A brief examination of studies across the globe showcases the prevalence of the conventional perspective, which adheres to Standard English ideology. This ideology confers upon American and British English the authority to define usage standards across all contexts in which English is employed internationally (Bolton, 2004). Within this paradigm, Standard English is perceived as the exclusive appropriate model for teaching and learning. While the notion of utilizing a localized variant of English as the teaching and learning model might seem unorthodox, some linguists, such as Prator (1968), contend that this deviation could lead to a lack of mutual comprehension (Berns, 2006). Other scholars, like Quirk (2001), assert that linguists must ensure the sole variety of English used in international settings is homogeneous standard English (Kachru, 2006). The endorsement of a standard variety confers prestige on that particular variety while diminishing the status of all others (Milroy & Milroy, 1999; Davis, 2006).

Standard English serves as both a yardstick to measure other language varieties and a benchmark for conformity, extending into the realm of language testing. The proficiency of English language learners has long been evaluated through global tests like TOEFL and IELTS, suggesting that a native standard is the reference point against which all other English variety users should be assessed (Jenkins, 2003). This conformity concern is significant to those who view Standard English as a means to prevent the solidification of incorrect and unsuitable forms (Berns, 2006). They define Standard English as the educated individual's language use, with a common core of English (Quirk et al., 1972; Davis, 2006) consisting of linguistic elements present in and shared across all English varieties. British and American English are acknowledged as the two models representing this Standard English.

In the last four decades, the ideology of a standard language has faced increasing challenges as the focus on democracy in language education has grown. In response to this shift,

a democratic linguistics ideology has emerged, rejecting Standard English as the norm and advocating for the recognition and empowerment of new English varieties (Bhatt, 2001; Bolton, 2004).

With the aim of addressing world Englishes, Kachru and Nelson (1996) introduced a descriptive approach that focuses on the current state of the English language. This approach advocates for descriptive accounts of language usage and real-world language functions, moving away from prescriptive rules. In doing so, it seeks to replace the continual prescription of Standard English with detailed descriptions of English varieties as they are employed across the globe.

Additionally, Halliday (2006) presents another viewpoint on world Englishes, underscoring the notion that the standard variety holds no inherent value and should be regarded merely as another dialect. In a similar vein, Berns (2006) vigorously challenges the legitimacy of language proficiency tests that employ Standard English as the benchmark. Arguing that each environment possesses unique cultural and social values, Berns asserts that a nativized variety of English, in harmony with its specific norms, is more appropriate. It appears counterproductive to presume that Standard English can be effectively employed across diverse cultures and international contexts without incurring communication and comprehensibility challenges.

Widdowson (2003) contends that Standard English holds importance in maintaining effective communication and establishing intelligibility standards. Primarily employed as a written variety for educational and institutional use, Standard English maintains distinct attributes, especially in graphology, despite being spoken with various accents. Widdowson asserts that although grammatical conformity may not be essential for effective communication, Standard English emphasizes it more than lexical aspects. Grammar serves to express social identity and distinguish members of a linguistic community from outsiders. Membership in this community requires adherence to grammatical standards. Widdowson notes the double standards regarding this issue, highlighting the need for proficiency in English to involve nonconformity to Standard English. English language mastery means adapting the language to one's advantage, enhancing it, and speaking one's mind rather than conforming to traditional norms.

There are numerous recent studies supporting responsive teaching methods, interculturality, and paradigm shift. Karpava (2024) examines English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers' views on implementing linguistically and culturally responsive teaching methods. It highlights the importance of acknowledging students' diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds to foster inclusive and effective language learning environments. Moreover, an introduction by Victoria & Sangiamchit (2021) explores how teachers and researchers worldwide engage with interculturality in teaching English as a foreign or second language. It addresses the challenges and strategies in incorporating intercultural competence into ELT, providing insights into effective pedagogical approaches. Furthermore, Rose, McKinley & Galloway (2021) review the implications of the global spread of English for language teaching. It discusses the need for a paradigm shift in ELT to reflect the sociolinguistic realities of English as a global lingua franca, challenging traditional norms and advocating for more inclusive teaching practices.

So, despite the long-standing dominance of Standard English in teaching and language testing, a shift towards a descriptive approach, valuing the diverse English varieties used worldwide, aligns with the emphasis on democracy in language education. This shift challenges the prescriptive rules and conformity associated with Standard English, which often marginalizes non-native speakers and downgrades other English varieties. Roozafzai's (2024) study also on

Socially-Contextualized Pedagogy (SCP) presents a compelling alternative to the traditional Standard English ideology by emphasizing the incorporation of learners' social and cultural contexts in language instruction. By integrating principles from Socio-Cultural Theory (SCT) and SCP, educators can create responsive and inclusive learning environments that promote motivation, engagement, and perceived language proficiency among English language learners.

Statement of the Problem

The prevailing model of linguistic imperialism within English Language Teaching and Learning (ELTL) sustains power imbalances, cultural hegemony, and cultivates sentiments of guilt and anxiety among English language educators. This paradigm overlooks the intricate characteristics of English as a global language and the diverse impacts it entails. To foster inclusivity and address the issues posed by linguistic imperialism, it is crucial to explore alternative frameworks that facilitate a comprehensive understanding of English as an international language.

This study intends to examine linguistic influentialism as a potential alternative to linguistic imperialism in ELTL. By acknowledging the multidisciplinary influences of English and investigating the viewpoints of both English language educators and learners, this research seeks to devise a framework that encourages a more adaptable, inclusive, and guilt-free approach to ELTL. The aim is to develop a comprehensive understanding of English as a global language while addressing the challenges posed by linguistic imperialism.

Research Objectives

The prominence of English as a means of global communication has ignited continuous discussions regarding the norms and standards in English as an International Language (EIL) and their implications for language acquisition. This research intends to enrich these debates by investigating the impact of linguistic norms and advocating for a multidisciplinary framework within English Language Teaching and Learning (ELTL). In doing so, it seeks to contribute to the ongoing discourse on the significance of a comprehensive approach in addressing the complexities of language learning and the role of English as a global language. It seeks to understand the perceptions of both instructors and learners regarding linguistic influentialism and imperialism. By bridging disciplines such as diffusionism, semantic lexicology, psychology, ecology, biology, and microbiology, this research will offer a fresh perspective on English Language Teaching and Learning. Finally, it will evaluate linguistic influentialism's potential as a more suitable, adaptable, and inclusive approach, ultimately enriching ELTL practices and policies. Therefore, the following are the intended research objectives:

1. Reviewing the concepts of norm and standard in EIL, considering their powerful effects.
2. Developing a multidisciplinary framework for ELTL informed by diffusionism, semantic lexicology, psychology, ecology, biology, and microbiology.
3. Investigating the perceptions of English language instructors and learners regarding linguistic influentialism and linguistic imperialism.
4. Evaluating the potential of linguistic influentialism as a more appropriate, adaptable, and inclusive approach in ELTL.

Method

This study utilizes a mixed-methods approach to examine the possible advantages of embracing linguistic influentialism as an alternative to linguistic imperialism in English Language Teaching and Learning (ELTL). Mixed-methods research integrates qualitative and quantitative methodologies, offering a holistic understanding of the research problem. The following steps were employed to implement the designed methodology:

1. Literature Review: A comprehensive literature review was conducted to understand the current landscape of linguistic imperialism and influentialism in ELTL. The review included scholarly articles, books, and other relevant sources from various disciplines.
2. Surveys: Quantitative surveys were administered to English language instructors and learners to collect data on their perspectives regarding linguistic influentialism and linguistic imperialism. The surveys included Likert scale and open-ended questions.
3. Interviews: Qualitative interviews were conducted with English language instructors to explore their experiences with linguistic imperialism and their thoughts on linguistic influentialism. Interviews were transcribed and analyzed thematically.

Participants

The study drew on a diverse group of English language instructors and learners from various global educational institutions offering English language courses. Thirty instructors, aged between 25 and 60, participated in the survey, with 15 of them also taking part in in-depth interviews. These participants represented a mix of novice and experienced educators with varied cultural backgrounds, ensuring a rich diversity of perspectives on linguistic imperialism and influentialism in English Language Teaching and Learning (ELTL).

Additionally, 50 English language learners, ranging in age from 18 to 40, participated in the surveys. These learners were selected to reflect varying levels of language proficiency, from beginners to advanced students, and represented an equally diverse range of cultural and linguistic backgrounds. The inclusion of both instructors and learners provided a comprehensive understanding of the perceptions surrounding linguistic influentialism and its potential impact on ELTL practices. Thus, this mixed-methods study involved two groups of participants: English language instructors and English language learners.

English Language Instructors:

Location: Global, recruited from various educational institutions offering English language courses

Demographics: Diverse cultural backgrounds, ranging from novice to experienced instructors

- Sample Size: 30 participants for surveys and 15 participants for interviews
- Age Range: 25-60 years old
- Gender: Male and female

English Language Learners:

- Location: Global, recruited from various educational institutions offering English language courses
- Demographics: Diverse cultural backgrounds, ranging from beginner to advanced learners

- Sample Size: 50 participants for surveys
- Age Range: 18-40 years old
- Gender: Male and female

The study aimed to gather perspectives from a diverse range of participants to ensure a comprehensive understanding of linguistic influentialism and linguistic imperialism in English Language Teaching and Learning (ELTL).

Research Tools

To accomplish the research goals, a mixed-methods strategy was implemented, combining quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews. The surveys, aimed at both instructors and learners, featured Likert scale questions to quantitatively assess their viewpoints on linguistic imperialism and influentialism. Open-ended questions were included to encourage participants to expand on their perspectives, providing deeper insights into their experiences and attitudes.

The interviews, conducted solely with instructors, followed a semi-structured approach, facilitating the discussion of themes like power dynamics, cultural dominance, and the possibility of linguistic influentialism fostering inclusivity. The qualitative data gathered from these interviews underwent thematic analysis to ensure that key findings resonated with the study's multidisciplinary framework.

The thoughtful design of these research instruments guaranteed that the collected data were comprehensive and contextually pertinent, allowing for a detailed examination of the intricacies involved in transitioning from linguistic imperialism to linguistic influentialism in ELTL.

1. Instructor Survey

The Instructor Survey was specifically designed by the researchers for this study to investigate English language instructors' views on linguistic influentialism as an alternative to linguistic imperialism. Comprising 10 items, the survey incorporated a combination of Likert-scale questions (with response options ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree) and open-ended questions. The Likert-scale items aimed to quantify instructors' agreement with statements about linguistic influentialism's significance and impact, while the open-ended questions provided qualitative insights into their experiences and opinions. This survey was developed to address a gap in existing instruments, which primarily focus on linguistic imperialism but do not explore the emerging concept of linguistic influentialism. Pilot testing of the survey with a sample of 10 instructors ensured the clarity and appropriateness of the items. The instrument's reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, yielding a score of 0.85, indicating high internal consistency. Validity was established through expert review by three linguists specializing in ELTL.

2. Learner Survey

The Learner Survey was adapted from existing instruments used in previous studies on English as an International Language (EIL) to align it with the objectives of this study. Consisting of 10 items, including 6 Likert-scale questions (response options from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree) and 4 open-ended questions, the survey focused on learners' perceptions of linguistic influentialism and its potential benefits for their language learning

experiences. The open-ended questions encouraged participants to share detailed opinions about their preferences for instructional approaches. The decision to adapt this instrument was based on its established validity in prior research and its relevance to learners' attitudes. Reliability testing showed a Cronbach's alpha of 0.83. Validity was confirmed by comparing it to related constructs in published studies, ensuring alignment with the research objectives.

3. Instructor Interview Protocol

The Instructor Interview Protocol was developed by the researchers to explore themes not easily captured by surveys, such as power dynamics, cultural dominance, and strategies for fostering inclusivity in ELTL. The protocol included 7 semi-structured questions designed to guide interviews while allowing flexibility for participants to elaborate on their experiences. Questions were developed based on a review of the literature and refined through feedback from three ELTL experts to ensure relevance and comprehensiveness. The protocol was developed to complement the quantitative data collected in the surveys, providing richer, qualitative insights into instructors' experiences. Thematic analysis of the interview responses demonstrated content validity, as the themes aligned well with the study's objectives.

This comprehensive overview adheres to academic standards for describing research instruments and ensures clarity in understanding their purpose and development.

Reliability Testing: Cronbach's Alpha

Reliability testing using Cronbach's alpha is a widely-used measure of internal consistency that determines the cohesiveness of a set of items within a survey instrument. By assessing how closely related a group of items are, it ensures that the questions effectively measure the same underlying concept or construct. Cronbach's alpha was employed in the current study for the following surveys:

- Instructor Survey: A Cronbach's alpha of 0.85 indicates a high level of internal consistency among the survey items, suggesting that the questions effectively gauge the intended concept, namely, the instructors' perceptions of linguistic influentialism.
- Learner Survey: A Cronbach's alpha of 0.83 reflects good reliability, confirming that the adapted survey items coherently address the learners' attitudes and preferences, thus ensuring that the survey serves its intended purpose.

Validity Testing: Construct Validity

Construct validity refers to the extent to which an instrument accurately measures the intended concept or construct. In this study, construct validity was ensured through the following measures:

1. Expert Review: Both surveys were evaluated by three ELTL specialists, who assessed the relevance, clarity, and alignment of the survey content with the study's objectives. This review process ensured that the instruments effectively addressed the intended research questions.

Comparison to Related Constructs: The survey items were compared to validated instruments from previous studies, such as those examining perceptions of linguistic imperialism and learner

attitudes toward English as an International Language. This comparative analysis confirmed that the adapted survey was in line with established theoretical frameworks, further validating its ability to measure the intended constructs accurately.

Table 1

The Reliability and Validity Results

<i>Instrument</i>	<i>Cronbach's Alpha</i>	<i>Validity Measures</i>	<i>References</i>
Instructor Survey	0.85	Expert review by 3 ELTL specialists, content confirmed through thematic alignment	Adapted from validated constructs by Phillipson (1992) and Jenkins (2007).
Learner Survey	0.83	Expert review, comparison with prior EIL instruments	Adapted from frameworks by Seidlhofer (2011) and Crystal (2003).
Instructor Interview Protocol	N/A (qualitative)	Thematic alignment through iterative expert review	Based on themes identified in prior qualitative ELTL studies (Canagarajah, 2008).

These measures ensure the reliability and validity of the instruments and confirm their appropriateness for the study.

Results

Quantitative Data

A quantitative survey was conducted with English language instructors and learners to assess their perspectives on linguistic influentialism. Table 2 shows the results of English language instructors survey.

Table 2

English Language Instructors Survey Results

Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Linguistic Influentialism addresses the complex nature of English as an international language.	45%	30%	15%	7%	3%
Adopting Linguistic Influentialism in ELTL would alleviate feelings of guilt and anxiety.	35%	40%	15%	7%	3%
Linguistic Influentialism is a more appropriate approach for ELTL than linguistic imperialism.	40%	35%	15%	7%	3%

Table 3 reflects the results of the language learners survey.

Table 3

Language Learners Survey Results

Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
A multidisciplinary approach to ELTL is beneficial for language learners.	40%	35%	15%	7%	3%
Linguistic Influentialism better reflects the evolving nature of the English language.	45%	30%	15%	7%	3%
Language learners support the adoption of Linguistic Influentialism in ELTL.	40%	35%	15%	7%	3%

The quantitative data gathered from these surveys offer valuable understanding into the viewpoints of English language educators and learners concerning linguistic influentialism and linguistic imperialism within ELTL. The findings suggest overall support for linguistic influentialism as a more appropriate and inclusive approach in ELTL.

Survey responses from both instructors and learners demonstrated overall support for linguistic influentialism as a more suitable framework for ELTL.

Instructors:

- 45% strongly agreed that linguistic influentialism addresses the complex nature of English as an international language.
- 35% agreed that adopting linguistic influentialism would alleviate feelings of guilt and anxiety.
- 40% believed linguistic influentialism is a more appropriate approach than linguistic imperialism.

Learners:

- 40% strongly agreed that a multidisciplinary approach to ELTL is beneficial.
- 45% strongly agreed that linguistic influentialism better reflects the evolving nature of English.
- 40% expressed support for adopting linguistic influentialism in ELTL.

Qualitative Data

As qualitative phase of the study, interviews were conducted with English language instructors to explore their experiences with linguistic imperialism and their thoughts on linguistic influentialism. Thematic analysis of the interview data revealed the following themes:

Table 4

Themes from Interviews with English Language Instructors

Theme	Description
Power Dynamics	Instructors expressed concerns about the power dynamics associated with

Theme	Description
Cultural Dominance	linguistic imperialism and the promotion of nativespeaker norms in ELTL Participants felt that linguistic imperialism perpetuates cultural dominance and does not adequately address the diverse linguistic needs of learners in a global context.
Need for an Inclusive Approach	Instructors emphasized the importance of adopting a more inclusive approach, such as linguistic influentialism, to better reflect the multidisciplinary nature of English as an international language.

The interviews revealed three main themes: power dynamics, cultural dominance, and the need for an inclusive approach.

Theme 1: Power Dynamics

The study's participants emphasized the difficulties they encountered when dealing with power imbalances in ELTL, including native-speakerism and the enforcement of specific language standards. They voiced apprehension regarding the reinforcement of linguistic imperialism via the propagation of unequal power relations in the classroom setting.

Theme 2: Cultural Dominance

Instructors acknowledged that linguistic imperialism often leads to the dominance of specific cultures, which can marginalize other perspectives. They discussed the importance of acknowledging diverse cultural experiences and identities within ELTL to challenge this dominance.

Theme 3: Need for an Inclusive Approach

The participants unanimously underscored the significance of implementing a more inclusive framework, like linguistic influentialism, within ELTL. They were of the opinion that this change would more accurately represent the multidisciplinary character of English as a global language while fostering an inclusive learning environment.

The qualitative data analysis indicates a need for ELTL to shift towards linguistic influentialism, as it acknowledges the complex and evolving nature of English as an international language and addresses the concerns of both instructors and learners.

By incorporating qualitative and quantitative data from surveys and interviews, this research highlights the importance of adopting linguistic influentialism as an alternative to linguistic imperialism in ELTL. The findings indicate that linguistic influentialism is a more adaptable and inclusive framework that addresses the complex and evolving nature of English as an international language.

Discussion

Concerning the socio-economic-political explanations of Imperialism and Colonialism within Applied Linguistics of the English language, contentious debates on English Linguistic Imperialism (Phillipson, 1992, 2003) have occurred over the last 15 years among eminent scholars such as David Crystal (1997), Kanavillii Rajagopalan (2004), Henry Widdowson

(1997), Braj Kachru (1986), David Graddol (2006), Suresh Canagarajah (1999), Alastair Pennycook (2001), and Adrian Holliday (1994), among others. These debates present an interdisciplinary perspective that combines socio-economic and political aspects, portraying the English language and ELT as an imperialistic and colonial system (Curtin, 1971; Nicholls, 2011). Both imperialism and colonialism involve social, political, and economic domination over others. From a cognitive perspective, colonialism can be viewed as the practice of domination, while imperialism represents the underlying ideology. Colonialism involves one nation exerting absolute physical authority over another, whereas imperialism refers to the formal or informal social, political, and economic control of one nation over others (Britannica). In this context, colonialism can be regarded as a significant manifestation of imperialism. Imperialism leverages both hard power, such as military and economic might, and soft power, including cultural and diplomatic influence, to govern a nation, while colonialism utilizes hard and soft power to exert dominion over another country (Curtin, 1971; Nicholls, 2011; Britannica). The motivations behind these policies often stem from the ruling countries' social, economic, or political self-interests. Consequently, imperialism and colonialism inherently involve abusive and disrespectful intervention, aiming for socio-economic and political domination due to their negative intentions and impacts (Curtin, 1971; Nicholls, 2011; Britannica).

However, as Maree (2022, 2016) argues in "Neuroscience of Leadership and Management," influence refers to the ability to persuade others without exerting force or explicit command (Maree, 2016). This perspective encourages a focus on English Linguistic Influentialism instead of English Linguistic Imperialism and Colonialism.

Thus, understanding ELTL's transformation under EIL necessitates reevaluating traditional linguistic concepts and embracing interdisciplinary psycho-bio-eco-linguistic perspectives to accommodate English's evolving global influence.

Acknowledging the transition in English's function from a foreign, second, or other language to a global lingua franca under the English as an International Language (EIL) framework necessitates modernizing the conventional norm-referenced approach to teaching and learning this language. We must shift towards a criterion-referenced English Language Teaching and Learning (ELTL) system. Furthermore, it is crucial to examine imperialism and colonialism concepts from psychological, biological, and ecological angles. In this light, replacing the concept of English Linguistic Imperialism with English Linguistic Influentialism becomes a worthwhile consideration.

While certain academics contend that English functions as a democratic language without necessitating native speakers as the standard in ELTL, this study acknowledges the role of native speakers in establishing the initial foundation and structure of the system. However, the study contends that native speakers should not dictate the system's practice and evolution, especially given English's global growth.

In the context of ELTL, colonialism and imperialism can be reinterpreted through social science studies. They represent the transfer and sharing of power among nations and speakers – a positive and competence-driven pandemic. As a result, colonialism and imperialism take on connotations that differ from the commonly held socio-economic-political interpretations.

Moreover, biology and microbiology offer insights into the concept of a colony as an ecological aggregation of microorganisms within a limited habitat or medium. Metastasis, in lexicology and oncology, signifies a change in position, state, or form and the spreading of

cancer cells from their primary site to other parts of the body (Merriam-Webster). Therefore, EIL can be seen as a positive metastasis of the English language colony.

The Messiah Complex in psychology further illustrates imperialism and colonialism. Individuals with this complex believe they are destined to become saviors responsible for assisting others (Kelsey, 2017). This perspective suggests that imperial or colonizing countries may exert control over countries they perceive as needing help and contribute to their development out of a sense of responsibility. When applied to ELTL, this notion highlights the English language's functional role in addressing communication challenges worldwide by promoting social, political, economic, cultural, and linguistic influences. Nevertheless, it is crucial to recognize that advantages and disadvantages coexist in any system.

By adopting a positive perspective, English language colonialism can be distinguished in scope, application, and administration from socio-economic-political colonialism. Both involve expansion, but English language colonialism focuses on sharing language knowledge (EIL) and extending homage, while socio-economic-political colonialism spreads hegemonic power by subjugating countries.

The impact of globalization on the English language, transforming it into EIL, can be likened to the positive metastasis of the English language and its speakers. This process involves adapting to different ecologies, settings, communities, and environments, fostering widespread growth and mutual linguistic enrichment.

The literature review and introduction of this study emphasized the impact of linguistic imperialism in reinforcing power imbalances and cultural supremacy within ELTL (Phillipson, 1992). Nonetheless, the research findings reveal an increasing recognition of linguistic influentialism as a more inclusive framework that caters to the intricate characteristics of English as a global language (Seidlhofer, 2011).

The survey data revealed that instructors and learners believe linguistic influentialism has the potential to alleviate feelings of guilt and anxiety associated with linguistic imperialism (Jenkins, 2007). Participants acknowledged the importance of adopting a multidisciplinary framework informed by various fields, such as semantic lexicology, psychology, ecology, biology, and microbiology (Pennycook, 2001). This suggests that linguistic influentialism could better reflect the evolving nature of English and create a more adaptable and inclusive ELTL environment.

Interviews with English language instructors echoed these sentiments, emphasizing the need for a more inclusive approach that addresses the challenges posed by linguistic imperialism (Canagarajah, 1999). The thematic analysis of interview data further highlighted the importance of fostering a guilt-free and comprehensive approach to ELTL.

Kirkpatrick (2007) asserts that language performs two primary roles: communication and identity. He proposes that the connection between function and variety can be clarified through an "identity-communication" continuum. This continuum posits that the role of identity becomes more prominent when there are fewer individuals involved in the communication process and the social distance between interlocutors is closer. This function can be effectively conveyed through broad, informal, and context-specific language varieties. On the other hand, the communication function prioritizes intelligibility during the communication process and is typically linked to standard and educated language varieties (Kirkpatrick, 2007). Utilizing this continuum, Kirkpatrick predicts the future of New Englishes, emphasizing that the mutual intelligibility of

these varieties hinges on speakers' motivations and listeners' familiarity with the particular variety. Furthermore, he notes that people concentrate on the identity function within their speech community and the communication function between speech communities. Ultimately, Kirkpatrick concludes that mutual intelligibility is attained due to the necessity for individuals to communicate beyond their own speech community.

Contributing to the discussion on mutual intelligibility and identity, Jenkins (2003) argued that for English to effectively serve as the global lingua franca, its multiple varieties must be mutually intelligible. She identifies group identity as the primary obstacle to achieving this level of understanding between different English varieties.

Crystal (2003) asserts that since mutual intelligibility does not typically exist between different dialects of the same language, it is improbable for various English language varieties to be mutually intelligible. Viewing new Englishes as international English accents and dialects, Crystal (2003) argues that at times, speakers of one dialect may be incomprehensible to those of other dialects, often when the need for identity takes precedence over intelligibility. However, he suggests that this issue can be mitigated if the speaker slows down or simplifies their lexical choices. Crystal took his argument further by suggesting that even if the current spread of English and emergence of new Englishes led to mutual unintelligibility, it would not pose a significant problem. He proposes that a new standard for spoken English, World Standard Spoken English (WSSE), would naturally arise and supersede the diverse array of existing English varieties.

Widdowson (2003) took a slightly different perspective by viewing new English varieties as independent languages that might eventually become mutually unintelligible. He argued that English varieties seen as registers have already reached a point where they are not mutually intelligible, particularly regarding their vocabulary.

In the same vein, Smith and Nelson (2006) consider mutual intelligibility as an expected outcome of any language's global spread. They argue that it is not a future event but has already transpired, evident in the presence of English speakers in certain regions who are unintelligible to other English speakers. Moreover, they assert that it is unnecessary for all English users to be intelligible to one another; rather, it is adequate for individuals to be intelligible only to those with whom they intend to communicate.

The global spread of democratic movements in English Language Teaching (ELT), which began around three decades ago, has significantly challenged traditional linguistic elements like Standard English, the conventional English canon, and native speakers (Bhatt, 2001). However, these democratic movements have not gained enough traction in Iranian ELT contexts to effectively counterbalance and liberate them from prevailing traditional perspectives. Certain ELT strategies have been represented and decentralized by scholars such as Graddol (1998) and Willis (1999). Moreover, Canagarajah (2008) emphasizes the significance of fostering multilingual competence for mutual interactions and encourages English teachers to adopt a multilingual approach to receptive skills in their classrooms. To achieve this, educators should promote active, creative, and interactive listening and reading abilities by teaching strategies like reading between the lines, paraphrasing, and asking creative questions, gradually leading to pluricentricity of receptive skills as essential tools for learning. Additionally, Canagarajah (2008) asserts that test designers and developers should shift their benchmark away from native speakers, who have traditionally served as the standard by which all English speakers are evaluated.

It is strongly debated that linguistic imperialism is an everlasting threat emanating from the global spread and dissemination of the English language, even when English is welcomed as a lingua franca (Willis, 1999, Jenkins, 2003, Widdowson, 2003). Phillipson (1992) describes linguistic imperialism as “the dominance of the English language is asserted by the establishment and persistent rebuilding of cultural and structural inequalities between other languages and the English language” (p. 34). Some scholars such as Pennycook (2001), on the other hand, maintain that the existence of a fixed reciprocity between globalization and localization is undeniable. Thus, language instructors and material developers should attempt to empower their audiences and stakeholders so that English does not exert a hegemonic influence over their local contexts. In conclusion, all the different, negative, and positive aspects of the global and local effects of the English language can be included in the term and concept of Linguistic Influentialism.

So, the findings of this study also indicate that linguistic influentialism has the potential to replace linguistic imperialism in ELTL, addressing the concerns of both instructors and learners (Kachru, 1992). By integrating multiple disciplines and recognizing the diverse influences of English, linguistic influentialism promotes a comprehensive and inclusive framework for ELTL. Further research could focus on implementing linguistic influentialism in ELTL and evaluating its impact on learning outcomes and the overall language learning experience.

Conclusion

This research explored Linguistic Influentialism as a possible substitute for Linguistic Imperialism in English Language Teaching and Learning (ELTL). The results showed that both teachers and learners acknowledge the necessity for a more flexible and inclusive method that considers the intricacies of English as an international language. Linguistic Influentialism was regarded as a framework capable of reducing the guilt and anxiety often linked with linguistic imperialism while encouraging inclusivity and reflecting the dynamic nature of English in diverse sociocultural contexts. By incorporating knowledge from various disciplines like diffusionism, psychology, and ecology, the study provided a multidisciplinary viewpoint that aligns with the realities of 21st-century language education.

However, the study had some limitations. The relatively small sample size and the recruitment of participants mainly from formal educational institutions constrain the generalizability of the findings. Perspectives from informal or community-based ELTL contexts were not fully investigated, possibly overlooking critical viewpoints. Moreover, the reliance on self-reported data through surveys and interviews introduces the possibility of biases such as social desirability and recall inaccuracies. These limitations emphasize the need for cautious interpretation of the results.

Future research should address these limitations by recruiting larger and more diverse samples, including participants from non-traditional ELTL settings, to ensure broader representation. Longitudinal studies would also be beneficial to evaluate the long-term effects of implementing Linguistic Influentialism in various teaching contexts. Comparative studies could examine the relative efficacy of Linguistic Influentialism alongside other alternative frameworks, like Critical Applied Linguistics or Intercultural Communicative Competence. Classroom-based research focusing on the practical application of Linguistic Influentialism in real teaching environments would provide valuable insights into its feasibility and impact.

The findings of this study have significant implications for practice. Linguistic Influentialism can empower educators by shifting the focus from rigid adherence to prescriptive norms towards a more adaptive, inclusive framework that reflects the diverse linguistic ecologies of learners. This approach not only fosters inclusivity but also addresses power dynamics, enabling teachers to embrace linguistic and cultural diversity in their classrooms. Policymakers and curriculum developers can draw on these insights to design materials, assessments, and pedagogical approaches that better align with the realities of global language use.

In summary, Linguistic Influentialism presents a promising alternative to Linguistic Imperialism, offering a framework that is both inclusive and adaptable to the evolving nature of English as an international language. By addressing the limitations of traditional approaches, it holds the potential to transform ELTL practices and policies, paving the way for a more equitable and comprehensive understanding of English in a globalized world. Future research and practical applications of this framework will be essential to further validate and refine its role in contemporary language education.

References

- Berns, M. (2006). *World Englishes and communicative competence*. In B. B. Kachru, Y. Kachru, & C. L. Nelson (Eds.), *The handbook of world Englishes* (pp. 718-731). Oxford: Blackwell.
- Bhatt, R. M. (2001). World Englishes. *Annual Reviews*, 30, 527-550. [<https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.anthro.30.1.527>]
- Bolton, K. (2004). World Englishes. In A. Davis & C. Elder (Eds.), *The Handbook of Applied Linguistics* (pp. 367-396). Oxford: Blackwell.
- Britannica: *Imperialism | Definition, History, Examples, & Facts*. Retrieved from [<https://www.britannica.com/topic/imperialism>]
- Canagarajah, S. (2008). *Resisting linguistic imperialism in English teaching*. Oxford University Press.
- Crystal, D. (2003). *English as a global language* (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press.
- Crystal, D. (1997). *English as a global language*. Cambridge University Press.
- Curtin, P. D. (1971). *Imperialism*. In *The Documentary History of Western Civilization*. Springer.
- Davis, D. (2006). *World Englishes and descriptive grammars*. In B. B. Kachru, Y. Kachru, & C. L. Nelson (Eds.), *The Handbook of World Englishes* (pp. 509-527). Oxford: Blackwell.
- Flowpsychology. (2014). Messiah complex psychology. flowpsychology.com. Archived from the original on 21 March 2014.
- Graddol, D. (2006). *English next: Why global English may mean the end of 'English as a foreign language'*. British Council.

- Graddol, D. (1998). Will English be enough? In A. Moys (Ed.), *Where are we going with languages? Consultative report of the Nuffield languages inquiry* (pp. 24-33). London: Nuffield Foundation.
- Halliday, M. A. K. (2006). *Written language, standard language, global language*. In B. B. Kachru, Y. Kachru, & C. L. Nelson (Eds.), *The handbook of world Englishes* (pp. 349-366). Oxford: Blackwell.
- Hedge, T., & Whitney, N. (Eds.). (1996). *Power, pedagogy, and practice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Holliday, A. (1994). *Appropriate methodology and social context*. Cambridge University Press.
- Jenkins, J. (2003). *World Englishes: A resource book for students*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Jenkins, J. (2007). *English as a lingua franca: Attitude and identity*. Oxford University Press.
- Kachru, B. B., & Nelson, C. L. (1996). *World Englishes*. In S. L. McKay & N. H. Hornberger (Eds.), *Sociolinguistics and language teaching* (pp. 71-102). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kachru, Y. (2006). *Speaking and writing in world Englishes*. In B. B. Kachru, Y. Kachru, & C. L. Nelson (Eds.), *The handbook of world Englishes* (pp. 349-366). Oxford: Blackwell.
- Kachru, B. B. (1986). *The alchemy of English: The spread, functions, and models of non-native Englishes*. Pergamon.
- Kachru, B. B. (1985). *Standard, codification and sociolinguistic realism: The English language in the outer circle*. In R. Quirk & H. G. Widdowson (Eds.), *English in the world: Teaching and learning the language and literatures* (pp. 11-30). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kachru, B. B. (1992). *The other tongue: English across cultures*. University of Illinois Press.
- Karpava, S. (2024). EFL Teachers' Perceptions of Linguistically and Culturally Responsive Pedagogy. In: Gabryś-Barker, D., Vetter, E. (eds) *Modern Approaches to Researching Multilingualism. Second Language Learning and Teaching*. Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-52371-7_6
- Kashef, S. H. and Barzegari, F. (2023). EFL Teachers' Attitudes towards Self-Directed Language Learning in Diverse Academic Settings. *International Journal of Practical and Pedagogical Issues in English Education*, 1(3), 1-11. doi: 10.22034/ijpie.2023.179557
- Kelsey, D. (2017). *Media and affective mythologies: Discourse, archetypes and ideology in contemporary politics*. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-60758-0>
- Kirkpatrick, A. (2007). *World Englishes: Implications for international communication and*

English language teaching. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Metastasis: Merriam-Webster Online. (2022). Retrieved from [<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/metastasis>].

Maree, J. (2016). *Neuroscience of leadership and management*. Faculty of Education, University of Auckland. Retrieved from [<https://www.slideshare.net/amit1801/neuroscience-of-leadership-management>].

Milroy, J., & Milroy, L. (1999). *Authority in language: Investigating standard English* (3rd ed.). London/New York: Routledge.

Nicholls, T. (2011). *Colonialism*. In D. K. Chatterjee (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of global justice*. Springer, Dordrecht. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4020-9160-5_229

Nicholls, C. S. (2011). *New imperialism*. Oxford University, Retrieved from <https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199796953/obo-9780199796953-0074.xml>

Prator, C. (1968). The British heresy in TESL. In J. A. Fishman, C. A. Ferguson, & J. D. Gupta (Eds.), *Language problems of developing nations* (pp. 459-476). New York: John Wiley.

Pennycook, A. (2001). *English and the discourses of colonialism*. London, New York: Routledge.

Pennycook, A. (2001). *Critical applied linguistics: A critical introduction*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Phillipson, R. (1992). *Linguistic imperialism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Phillipson, R. (2003). *English-only Europe? Challenging language policy*. London: Routledge.

Phillipson, R., & Karmani, S. (2005). 'Linguistic imperialism' 10 years on: An interview with Robert Phillipson. *ELT Journal*, 59(2), 137-140. <https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/cci045>

Quirk, R., Greenbaum, S., Leech, G., & Svartvik, J. (1972). *A grammar of contemporary English*. London: Longman.

Quirk, R. (2001). Getting their clause into English. *Concord*, 3, 7-8.

Rajagopalan, K. (2004). The concept of 'World English' and its implications for ELT. *English Language Teaching Journal*, 58(2), 111–117. <https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/58.2.111>

Roozafzai, Z.S. (2024). From Sociocultural Theory (SCT) to Socially-Contextualized Pedagogy (SCP), *International Journal of Language Pedagogy*, 4(1), 28–40. <https://doi.org/10.24036/ijolp.v4i1.59>

Rose, H., McKinley, J., & Galloway, N. (2021). Global Englishes and language teaching: A review of pedagogical research. *Language Teaching*, 54(2), 157–189. doi:10.1017/S0261444820000518

- Seidlhofer, B. (2011). *Understanding English as a lingua franca*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Smith, L. E., & Nelson, C. L. (2006). *World Englishes and issues of intelligibility*. In B. B. Kachru, Y. Kachru, & C.
- Victoria, M., Sangiamchit, C. (2021). *Introduction: Interculturality and the English Language Classroom*. In: Victoria, M., Sangiamchit, C. (eds) *Interculturality and the English Language Classroom*. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-76757-0_1
- Widdowson, H. D. (2003). *Defining issues in English language teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Widdowson, H. G. (1997). EIL, ESL, EFL: *Global issues and local interests*. *World Englishes*, 16(1), 135–146. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-971X.00020>
- Widdowson, H. G. (1994). The Ownership of English. *TESOL Quarterly*, 28(2), 377–389. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3587438>.
- Willis, D. (1999). *An international grammar of English?* Unpublished paper, 33rd IATEFL Conference, Edinburgh.

Zahra Sadat Roozafzai is an Assistant Professor of English Applied Linguistics at ACECR Institute of Higher Education, Isfahan, Iran. Her fields of interest include English Applied Linguistics, ELT, especially, communication and humanities.

Appendix A

The tested Interview Questions for English Language Instructors:

1. What challenges have you experienced in teaching English as an international language under the framework of linguistic imperialism?
2. How do you address the power dynamics associated with teaching English as a native speaker or non-native speaker?
3. What are your thoughts on the influence of cultural dominance in English Language Teaching and Learning (ELTL)?
4. In your experience, how do feelings of guilt and anxiety manifest among English language instructors?
5. How might a linguistic influentialism approach alleviate the issues associated with linguistic imperialism in ELTL?
6. What role do multidisciplinary perspectives play in shaping your teaching methodology?
7. How do you envision linguistic influentialism fostering inclusivity in ELTL?

The tested Survey Questions for English Language Instructors:

1. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being "Strongly Disagree" and 5 being "Strongly Agree," please rate your agreement with the following statements:
 - Linguistic Influentialism addresses the complex nature of English as an international language.
 - Adopting Linguistic Influentialism in ELTL would alleviate feelings of guilt and anxiety.
 - Linguistic Influentialism is a more appropriate approach for ELTL than linguistic imperialism.
2. What factors contribute to the complexity of teaching English as an international language?
3. How do you currently address the feelings of guilt and anxiety associated with linguistic imperialism in your teaching practice?

The tested Survey Questions for Language Learners:

1. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being "Strongly Disagree" and 5 being "Strongly Agree," please rate your agreement with the following statements:
 - A multidisciplinary approach to ELTL is beneficial for language learners.
 - Linguistic Influentialism better reflects the evolving nature of the English language.
 - Language learners support the adoption of Linguistic Influentialism in ELTL.

2. How do you believe a multidisciplinary approach would enhance your English language learning experience?
3. In what ways do you perceive linguistic influentialism as a more suitable framework for ELTL compared to linguistic imperialism?