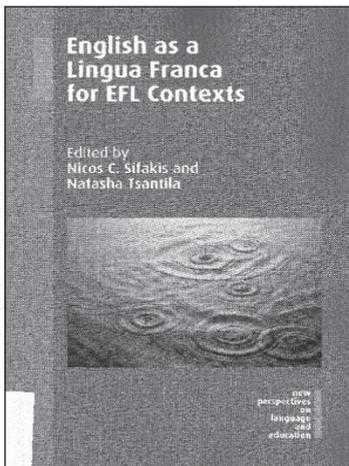


English as a Lingua Franca for EFL Contexts

Applying the notion of English as a lingua franca in the language classroom. A review of Sifakis, N. C., & Tsantila, N. (2019). Bristol (UK): Multilingual Matters.
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English as a Lingua Franca for EFL Contexts is an innovative book containing a compendium of chapters on the implementation of the notion of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom. In other words, it suggests an ELF-aware approach to English language teaching. The book starts with an introduction by the editors (Nicos Sifakis and Natasha Tsantila) in which they set the grounds for the concepts of ELF and EFL from a critical perspective. This introduction includes a brief theoretical review of the topic and also reflects on the implications of ELF research for language teaching and its connections with EFL practice. Finally, it gives

a short summary of each of the chapters of the book, and some indications related to the methodology and target audience of the volume. This introduction is a very useful starting point to approach the book, particularly for those who are not familiar with the concept of English as a Lingua Franca, as it provides the reader with the basic knowledge to follow the rest of the book while raising an interest on its reading.

Following the introduction, the book is divided in twelve chapters organized in five parts. These chapters are written by a variety of authors with a strong background on EFL teaching and/or research, which adds up to the value of their contributions. The first part includes two chapters dealing with theoretical issues related to ELF and its connection with the teaching of EFL. The second part contains two other chapters specifically connected to the role of ELF in EFL pedagogy. The difference between parts 1 and 2 lays on the fact that the first part establishes a theoretical background, while the second one offers a much more practical perspective, including actual teaching practices in which English is taught from an ELF-aware perspective in EFL classrooms. Part 3 of the volume focuses on the creation of language learning materials from the perspective of implementing the

notion of ELF in EFL classrooms as well. The three chapters included in this section of the book contain practical experiences in real language classrooms and how a number of EFL teachers have managed to create materials that contribute to an ELF-aware perspective in the EFL classroom beyond the use of the textbook. When it comes to part 4, its three chapters are related to the necessity of changing the attitudes of EFL teachers towards English as a lingua franca. Section 5 of the book contains two chapters that focus on the possibility of including an ELF-aware perspective in the testing and assessment of English as a foreign language. Finally, there is a concluding chapter which encapsulates the main ideas of the whole book, reflects on the dynamic nature of ELF, and establishes a set of principles to approach English as a lingua franca.

From my point of view, *English as a Lingua Franca for EFL Contexts* is an excellent compilation of state-of-the-art ideas revolving around the topic of English as a lingua franca not only from a theoretical perspective, but also (and mostly) from a practical perspective. The editors' main aim is to make an overall assessment of what has been done so far in the ELF area, and at the same time provide insights for the English as a foreign language classroom from an ELF-aware perspective. In my opinion, both objectives are fully achieved considering the organization of the book and the topics dealt with in its chapters mentioned above.

Moreover, it seems that the main thesis of the editors and authors of the chapters of this volume is that the notion of ELF -with the implications it entails, which are thoroughly discussed through the book- should be implemented in the English as a foreign language classroom if teachers are to provide their students with an authentic EFL learning experience, which will allow them to communicate in real situations where English is commonly used by non-native speakers of the language for a variety of purposes. This view does not entail a rejection of previous approaches to EFL teaching that have already been tested and are seemingly successful, though. In fact, the whole book presents a social constructivist perspective on communication and language learning, and it constantly encourages an inclusive, open and flexible ELF-aware approach to English language teaching. To put it simply, it suggests that EFL teachers could enrich their language teaching practices by implementing an ELF-aware perspective. This thesis is effectively proven through the volume especially from the numerous practical experiences presented. The results of these practical experiences show that adopting an ELF-aware perspective entails a double benefit for EFL learners. On the one hand, it is enriching for the students from a linguistic perspective because it provides them with the linguistic tools to face real communicative situations with a variety of speakers from a wide range of cultural backgrounds. On the other hand, it also opens up the learners' mind from a cultural perspective, which will prove to be useful in a world where intercultural communication is more and more common.

On top of that, it is worth mentioning that one of the strong points of *English as a Lingua Franca for EFL Contexts* is its internal organization. Preceding the introductory chapter and following the index with the contents of the book, the editors include a brief section with information about each of the authors of the chapters. As I see it, this information is really interesting for the reader to get to know the academic and professional background of the contributors, and even contacting them. Following the contributors' information, there is a list of abbreviations that is fundamental for the understanding of the book. However, I would say that the high amount and variety of abbreviations that are found throughout the volume make its understanding more difficult at first. Finally, there is an index of key concepts at the end of the book that is really useful if the reader wishes to quickly find information on specific contents. Furthermore, the internal structure of the chapters contribute to their understanding, too. Each chapter starts by establishing its general aims, expected outcomes and key concepts. This is particularly useful when the reader wishes to select which chapters to read (if he/she does not wish to read the whole book), and also to have a general view of the chapters before reading them, which facilitates their reading and understanding. In the same line, each chapter contains a synopsis at the end. This proves to be useful to remember their key ideas. To conclude, all chapters include lists of references and further reading. These are a real jewel if the reader wishes to continue exploring the topic at hand.

Very much in line with the structure and organization of the book and its chapters is its target audience. According to Sifakis and Tsantila, the book is designed for undergraduate and postgraduate students taking courses on English language teaching and/or applied linguistics, teachers of English to speakers of other languages following training seminars, and publishers and developers of language learning materials among others. Moreover, they mention that the book is directed towards a distance learning methodology in the layout of the chapters and the writing. In fact, all chapters (with the exception of the introduction and the conclusion) include a number of RQAs (Reflective Questions and Activities) that guide the reader to think about his/her previous knowledge, reflect on his/her own experiences, and understand the key concepts. In my opinion, the structure of the book, its chapters, and its contents are one of the strongest points of the volume, because they facilitate the reading enormously –I would say that even those readers with no prior knowledge on the topic could follow the book- and they make the reading experience more engaging and enjoyable.

To sum up, *English as a Lingua Franca for EFL Contexts* is a book that comes together effectively, and it is highly recommendable for anyone interested in the topic of English as a lingua franca and its implications for the teaching of English as a foreign language, or simply in EFL teaching and learning. Its neat and effective structure together with the content of its chapters make it accessible and valuable for any reader, from the under-

graduate student who has just started approaching the complexity of teaching English to speakers of other languages and does not have much background knowledge on the topic yet, to the postgraduate student collecting information for his/her PhD thesis. On top of that, the book presents practical cases from a wide range of countries such as Greece, Brazil or Thailand, oriented towards learning levels ranging from primary, to secondary, to university education. Therefore, it constitutes an invaluable source of ideas for practicing EFL teachers at any level who wish to go a step further in their approach to English in their classrooms in my opinion. Furthermore, its critical, practical, innovative and social constructivist perspective make it an effective tool to open the reader's mind. In short, *English as a Lingua Franca for EFL Contexts* is a book that is worth the attention of anyone involved in the teaching of English as a foreign language.