

Liberalist or Alarmist: Iranian ELT Community's Attitude to Mainstream ELT vs. Critical ELT

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Abstract

In the era of globalization, the worldwide spread of English especially through English Language Teaching (ELT) is known as one of the most controversial issues in the field of applied linguistics. While in this era, the mainstream ELT or so-called the liberalist position publicizes the spread of Center-created methods and materials as well as linguistic and cultural norms and practices and introduces itself as a value-free trend, the emergence of an outstanding critical standpoint known as linguistic imperialism theory, so-called the alarmist position, introducing English spread and the mainstream ELT as inherently problematic phenomena, has led to forming some notable debates and controversies in this arena. Conceiving the importance of this conceptual shift in the field of applied linguistics, this research is an attempt to study the Iranian ELT professionals' and university teachers' attitudes on these two opposing positions to find out to which position the Iranian ELT community tends. To gain insights into this issue, a mixed-method including both qualitative and quantitative methods was designed and conducted. In the qualitative phase, a semi-structured interview was conducted with nine ELT professionals and applied linguists. A content analysis of the data gathered in this phase along with the available literature on the topic yielded a 10 item Likert-scale questionnaire seeking ELT professionals' and university teachers' attitudes about the hotly debated opposing beliefs and tenets around the topic. To check the Iranian ELT community's perspective at large, in the second phase a questionnaire survey was conducted on 158 participants. Presenting the findings obtained from both phases, this research attempts to discuss the findings both qualitatively and quantitatively under four categories including (a) methods: nature and function, (b) materials and curriculum development, (c) native vs. nonnative teachers, standards and variations, (d) English, ELT and cultures. The analyses of the data reveal that the Iranian ELT community tends mostly to this critical conceptual shift and linguistic imperialism standpoint carries special weight in Iranian ELT community's perspective.

Keywords: English language teaching, linguistic imperialism, globalization, Iranian context

Introduction

Today, there is no doubt that an unparallel language, namely English, is encircling the world in such a way that for many the term globalization is crucially linked with the rise of this language (Kumaravadivela, 2009; Pennycook, 2010; Salverda, 2002; Yano, 2004). In this case, the increasing ubiquity of English as a global language, which in Brutt-Griffler's

(2002, p. 182) words," stands in an interesting relation to the field of ELT", has roused many reactions and raised many questions for those active in this field (Yildirim and Okan, 2005).

Certainly, the growing importance and increasing presence of English and its usage as a world language, a global language, a lingua franca or an international language (see Brutt-Griffler, 2002; Crystal, 1997; Jenkins, 2007; McKay, 2002) as well as the huge enthusiasm for learning this language in virtually all societies and its increasing status in educational arena throughout the world have added much weight to its standing.

As a result of this situation, it is obvious that the current status of ELT has led to a number of challenging questions not directly limited to purely pedagogical ideas and issues (Anderson, 2003; McKay, 2002; Zacharias, 2003). In this regard, while firstly the spread of English especially through ELT was considered as a favorable development or as a purely instrumental advantage from Inner Circle countries (where English is generally the L1 including USA and UK) to Outer Circle countries (where English plays an institutional role as a L2 such as India and Singapore) and Expanding Circle countries (where English is learnt as a foreign language like China, Russia and Iran), the advent of some outstanding critical views and theories about the spread of English especially through ELT, as the most systematic way of English spread in the world, has aroused sensitivity, criticism and awareness among scholars, language planners, ELT professionals and applied linguists. In this regard, Anderson (2003) maintains that in 1990s, the publication of Phillipson's *Linguistic Imperialism*, not the first publication to raise the issues it does, but qualitatively seems to have had the most impact, has been the symbolic birth of an ongoing intellectual shift in applied linguistics. While this dominant trend has been introducing the ELT mainstream pedagogy and its Center-produced practices, methods and tenets as the best effective and beneficial trend which helps engender global communication which brings benefits to nation-states as well as individuals, the newly-emerged intellectual shift known as linguistic imperialism theory has attempted to challenge the unquestioned givens of the mainstream ELT pedagogy.

In the process of globalization, as Iranian society has become part of the globalizing and globalized world, on the one hand, with the changing role of English and ELT and with the increasing presence of English in different aspects of the society and on the other hand, with showing huge enthusiasm for learning English as well as with raising awareness and resistance toward the current status of English and ELT in this society which its dominant ideology is known as an anti-imperialistic ideology, certainly, the study of ELT professionals' and university teachers' attitudes on the tenets and claims of these two opposing positions can provide significant insights in any language planning and decision-making. In this respect, the present paper, as part of a broader study, is a contribution to the field in revealing and studying the Iranian ELT community's attitudes on four notable aspects of this controversial issue, namely (a) methods: nature and function, (b) materials and curriculum development, (c) native vs. nonnative teachers, standards and variations, (d) English, ELT and cultures to find out to which position it has much tendency.

The present paper is divided to three major sections. First, the theoretical basis of the study is introduced. Secondly, the methodology of the study including the participants, data collection procedure, data analysis and the results are presented and finally, the findings are discussed.

The Global Spread of English

"For better or worse, by choice or force, English has traveled to many parts of the world and has been used to serve various purposes. This phenomenon has created positive interactions as well as tensions between global and local forces and has had serious linguistic, ideological, sociocultural, political and pedagogical implications" (Sharifian, 2009, p. 1). Such a recent growth in its use and presence in many aspects, its unprecedented expansion, and especially its consequences and implications in some fields of study including applied linguistics, sociolinguistics, etc. have led to calling this language with terms which each one, by and large, reveals, on the one hand, the rise, importance, and the new status of English and on the other hand, shows the inseparable association established between English and globalization.

Reviewing the current status of English as well as the available literature on the topic shows that English seems to work almost everywhere and its presence is obvious in most aspects of the human's life including education, business, diplomacy, communication, media, science, entertainment and the internet. In other words, such expansion reveals that English continues its triumph as a worldwide language.

The Globalization of ELT

Like almost everything else, languages have been affected by the globalization and according to Pennycook (2007) among the languages, it is English which is closely tied to processes of globalization. In other words, the presence of English in formal education systems in different societies is so tangible which for many an equation between 'foreign language' and 'English' is taken for granted (Kubota, 2002). As Altbach (2007) writes, English is the world's most widely studied second language. This gives it a significant advantage in many non-English-speaking countries simply because of the number of speakers and the fact that it is by far the most widely distributed language. There are, for example, more students studying English in China than are studying English in the US, and more speakers of English in India than in Britain.

In such conditions, Shin (2007) observes that the impact of globalization on English education is essentially pervasive in ELT practices in different parts of the world. Wilson (2005) maintains that the globalization of ELT practices involves the spread of similar Center-created teaching methods and materials and the imposition of native speaker linguistic and cultural norms across the world. The proponents of such a globalization believe that the best teaching materials, methods and expertise come from countries in the Inner Circle (Yildirim and Okan, 2005), thus the transfer of pedagogical expertise and personnel from the developed English-speaking countries to other contexts is followed. In this perspective, native or near-native oral competence is a goal and the mainstream pedagogy provided by the Center should be the only source.

Two Opposing Camps of Thought

As noted, the appearance of a conceptual shift known as linguistic imperialism in the field of applied linguistics has seriously challenged the mainstream ELT. From a broader perspective, as a working definition, Phillipson (1992) regards English linguistic imperialism as "the dominance of English which is asserted and maintained by the

establishment and continuous reconstitution of structural and cultural inequalities between English and other languages "(p. 47).

In this sense, Phillipson introduces English linguistic imperialism as a sub-type of linguisticism. He defines linguisticism as "the ideologies and structures where language is the means for effecting and maintaining an unequal allocation of power and resources" (p. 55). Phillipson believes that there is no reason to restrict linguisticism to matters of ideology alone, thus he tries to shed light on the relationship between ELT and imperialism. Concerning the scope of such imperialism, he states that it operates globally as a key medium of Center-Periphery relations (p. 56) and in such relations, most of the benefits and spin-offs accrue to the Center, while the Periphery remains in a dependent situation (p. 57). In this regard, concerning the relationship between ELT and linguistic imperialism which involves the central theme of his famous work, Phillipson attempts to crucially challenge some key tenets and principles of the mainstream ELT including monolingual tenet, native speaker tenet, early start tenet, maximum exposure tenet, etc., which were accompanied and reinforced by some new critical ideas from his proponents.

Crystal's *English as a Global Language* (1997) took a position in contrast with Phillipson's. Contrary to him, Crystal contributes much of the success of this language to having "repeatedly found itself in the right place at the right time" (p.110). In more accurate words, Crystal attributes the spread of English to luck (Hellinger, 2005). In fact, while Phillipson (1992) regards English as a threat to other languages and cultures throughout the world, Crystal (1997) appears optimistic and even characterizes this situation as one of opportunity and regards English as a neutral and beneficial tool for global understanding.

Reviewing the happenings in this field reveals that the presence of these two conflicting theoretical camps has led to creating a continuum of theories and stances which each one has gained some weight in this arena. In this newly-emerged critical conceptual shift known as the alarmist position, Phillipson (1992 and 2009) and other theorists and scholars including Canagarajah (1999), Kelly Hall and Eggington (2000) and Pennycook (1994, 1998 and 2001) maintain that the global spread of English especially through the current English teaching policy is more or less a direct continuation of the imperialist or hegemonic practices. What these views and theories has in common as Anderson (2003) asserts, is this belief that the global spread of English is inherently problematic, related to wider political and ideological issues; and most importantly, ELT practices are neither value-free nor always culturally, socially and pedagogically appropriate.

In contrast, the mainstream ELT or so-called the liberalist position emphasizes that ELT in its mainstream is a tool for global understanding. In their views, English as a neutral vehicle for communication is a functional tool for pragmatic purposes and does not carry cultural, political and ideological baggage. In this regard, Wardhaugh (1987) maintains that since no requirements are tied to the learning of English, it belongs to everyone or no one. In his terms, "no cultural value tied to learning of English and it is tied to no particular social, political, economic or religious system, or to a specific racial or cultural group (p.15). Seaton (1997) introduces "English as a neutral means for global communication"(p. 361). Crystal (1997) characterizes this situation as one of opportunity and regards English as a neutral and beneficial tool for global understanding.

Specifically, regarding the ELT, this position has been introducing native speakers as the ideal language teachers (Beardsmore, 1993; Genesee, 1987). According to Anderson (2003), as noted, in the mainstream professional-academic discourse of ELT, there are certain unquestioned givens which have been produced and reproduced by academics,

institutions, publishing companies as well as teachers. In his words, according to these givens the best teaching methods, materials and expertise originate from institutions in Inner-Circle and these institutions and their personnel should therefore help the development and running of English language curricula and programs globally. Moreover, the ideal teacher is the English native speaker from English speaking countries. In this regard, one of the important tenets used in Commonwealth conference on the Teaching of English as a second language held in Makerere, in 1961 and has repeatedly produced and reproduced by mostly Center academics and publishing companies is "the ideal teacher of English is a native speaker"(cited in Phillipson, 1992). Thus, the presence of teachers, academics, curriculum developers, institutions such as the British Council, and publishers in the teaching of English globally is part of a mutually beneficial transaction between Core and Periphery. These givens as some of the most important tenets of the mainstream ELT are those which have been criticized, challenged and problematized by linguistic imperialism theory during the recent years.

Having provided a brief review of the relevant literature, here the context in which this study was conducted is introduced. Then, the findings are presented. As mentioned, this study was designed to explore the attitudes and tendencies of Iranian ELT community to the claims and tenets of these the two opposing stances. In this respect, it is believed that the present study contributes to ELT profession by revealing the attitudes of Iranian ELT community about the conflicting issues of methods, materials, curriculum development as well as native speaker norms and cultural aspects of English and ELT. The results of this study are believed to suggest important implications for ELT in Iran in terms of development of language teaching methods, materials, curriculum development, etc.

Methodology

The methodology applied in this research was mixed-method including both qualitative and quantitative methods and among the current typological approaches in mixed methods, QUALITATIVE → QUANTITATIVE was used. It is worth mentioning that regarding this procedure, Dörnyei (2007) considers it as a frequently recommended procedure for designing a new questionnaire which involves conducting a small-scale explanatory qualitative study first to provide background information on the context, to identify and narrow down the focus of the possible variables and to act as a valuable source of ideas for preparing the item pool for the purpose of questionnaire scale construction. So, to follow this procedure, in the first phase, we used a qualitative method, i.e. conducting interview, to richly describe Iranian ELT professionals' attitudes toward some notable controversies and claims around the ELT norms and practices such as methods, materials, nativity and cultural aspects. In the second phase, we utilized a quantitative method, i.e. questionnaire administration, in order to identify and examine ELT professionals' attitudes among the population. As a matter of fact, the qualitative findings not only were used in preparing the questionnaire, but were used to assist in explaining and interpreting the results of the quantitative study and give additional insights into the issue.

Qualitative Part

The strategy of inquiry used in the qualitative part was interview. To get their attitudes, the participants took part in a face-to-face semi-structured interview with one of

the researchers. As Dörnyei (2007) regards, this type offers a compromise between structured and unstructured interviews. In his words, although there is a set of pre-prepared guiding questions and prompts, the format is open-ended and the interviewee is encouraged to elaborate on the issues raised in an explanatory manner.

The sampling method in this phase of study was that of criterion-based selection. In this form of sampling, as LeCompte and Preissle (1993) note, the researcher creates a list of attributes essential to the study and then seeks out participants to match the criteria. Our criteria were as follows: a) Ph.D. in TEFL or linguistics, b) Having English teaching experience, c) Having ideas or having published work on the topic. According to these criteria, nine ELT professionals meeting the needed criteria participated in this phase which their characteristics were as following:

Table 1
Participants' Characteristics

<i>participants</i>	<i>degree/major</i>	<i>gender</i>	<i>levels of teaching experience</i>	<i>Interest(s)</i>
A	PhD/ Linguistics	male	BA/ MA/ PhD	discourse analysis
B	PhD/ Linguistics	male	BA/ MA/ PhD	discourse analysis/ applied linguistics
C	PhD/ TEFL	male	BA/ MA	materials development
D	PhD/TEFL	female	BA/ MA	sociolinguistics/ methodology
E	PhD/TEFL	male	BA/ MA/ PhD	teacher education/ methodology/ critical pedagogy
F	PhD/TEFL	male	BA/ MA	methodology
G	PhD/ TEFL	male	BA/ MA	sociolinguistics / methodology
H	PhD/ Linguistics	male	BA/ MA	sociolinguistics
I	PhD/ TEFL	male	BA/ MA	teacher education / methodology

For the interview phase of the work an interview protocol was created by the researchers. The schedule was a set of open-ended questions and a range of topics and issues to be covered (see Appendix 1). Here, it is worth noting that after reviewing the available literature on this issue, some of the main areas of controversy including methods, materials and curriculum development, issues on nativity and the cultural aspects of English and ELT were extracted to be specifically included in the interviews. As noted, they were semi-structured interviews, thus in every interview, some new questions were raised. Then, some appointments were made with the participants of the study. The interviews were conducted by one of the researchers. The shortest interview took about 40

minutes and the longest one was about 90 minutes. The language of the interview was Persian. They were recorded by an MP4 player with the permission of the participants and then they were transcribed by the interviewer.

Data Analysis

The data gathered in this phase were used both in both preparing and enriching the questionnaire, in explaining and interpreting the results of the quantitative study and giving additional insights into the issues. In this phase, content analysis was used which yielded the items regarding the ELT professionals' attitudes toward ELT with specific reference to the Iranian context.

Quantitative Part

The participants of the second phase of study were 158 ELT professionals and university teachers throughout the country. The following table presents their characteristics in more details:

Table 2
Participants' Characteristics

<i>features</i>	<i>N= 158</i>	<i>percentage</i>
Gender	N= 154	
Male	90	58.4 %
Female	64	41.6 %
Educational qualifications	N= 158	
MA	104	65.9 %
Ph.D. student	31	19.6 %
Ph.D.	23	14.5 %
Major	N= 158	
TEFL	113	71.5 %
Linguistics	22	13.9 %
Translation	19	12 %
Literature	4	2.5 %
Age	N= 150	
24-35	116	77.3 %
36-45	22	14.6 %
46-55	10	6.6 %
55- --	2	1.3 %
Years of teaching experience	N= 154	
1-5	70	45.4 %
6-10	33	21.4 %
11-20	36	23.3 %
21-30	12	7.8 %
31- --	3	1.9 %

Based on the data gathered in the first phase and the findings found from the literature in this field, a Likert-scale questionnaire was prepared by the researchers included 10 statements (see Appendix 2). Of them, 5 were related to the principles and tenets of the alarmist camp of thought and 5 were about the ideas and principles of the liberalist camp of thought. It is worth noting that these 10 statements were prepared on the basis of four categories including the nature and function of methods, the nature and features of materials and curriculum development, native vs. nonnative teachers, standards and variations and English, ELT and culture. It is worth noting that before its actual administration, it was studied and revised repeatedly, and then for the purpose of content and linguistic validity, it was piloted with 20 university teachers having the given criteria. The responses to the questionnaire in pilot stage were fed into SPSS to analyze its reliability. The reliability coefficients were calculated repeatedly for each part. Employing Cronbach alpha, it turned out that an alpha coefficient of 0.82 was found for the alarmist position's statements (No. 2, 4, 8, 9, 10) and 0.84 for the liberalist position's statements (No. 1, 3, 5, 6, 7). In addition, on the basis of the feedbacks obtained, some modifications were done and in this stage the questionnaire was finalized.

Procedure

A total of 392 questionnaires were administered through face-to-face contact or email by the researchers themselves. Of the 201 questionnaires that were administered through face-to-face contact, 111 were filled out and of the 192 questionnaires that were emailed, 47 were returned. Thus, the response rates to them were 55.5 % and 24.6 % respectively. In each one, namely the paper version and the electronic one, the purpose of the study and a request for participants were stated. The data were collected over an 8-week period.

The Analyses of the Findings

The results of the interviews and the questionnaire can be classified and analyzed under four categories: 1) ELT methods: nature and functions, 2) materials and curriculum development, 3) native vs. nonnative teachers, standards and varieties, 4) English, ELT and cultures.

After providing the findings obtained from two phases, the researchers tried to present and interpret the data obtained through the questionnaires. It is worth noting that to gain more insights on the topic, the relevant ideas presented by the interviewees participated in the first phase of the study are also provided. Then the results are discussed. The discussion is structured around the quantitative and qualitative phases of the study, integrating the findings of each section to create a more interconnected whole. Certainly, using the data from the both sources of inquiry enables us to organize the findings more appropriately and comprehensively.

ELT Methods: Nature and Functions

Along with some pedagogical causes which have challenged the concept and position of methods in the recent years, the linguistic imperialism theory is one of the most notable approaches which has seriously questioned the concept of methods. While the

mainstream pedagogy advocates the Center-created methods and introduces them as some neutral and value-free instruments of language teaching, these notions and beliefs have seriously been challenged by critical linguists including Canagarajah (1999), Holliday (2005), Pennycook (1994 and 1998) and Tollefson (1995).

In this regard, to check the attitude of Iranian ELT professionals, two questions were proposed and the results are presented in table 3.

Table 3
Center-produced Methods as the Best

		Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1- Best teaching methods come from the native English speaking countries. <i>(liberalist)</i>	<i>N</i>	13	19	43	57	26
		Agree		Undecided	Disagree	
	<i>N</i>	32		43	83	
	<i>%</i>	20.2 %		27.2 %	52.5 %	

Concerning this question which involves an important given in the field of ELT, namely the best teaching methods come from countries in the Inner-Circle, the findings indicate that only 20.2 % of the respondents agree on the issue and 52.5 % disagree. Regarding the second question which is related to the notion of methods from the linguistic imperialism point of view, the findings show that 70.2 % of the respondents agree with this position. In other words, they do not see methods as neutral and value-free instruments of language teaching.

Table 4
Methods as Non- neutral Cultural Construct

		Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
2- Methods are not value-free, but cultural constructs. <i>(alarmist)</i>	<i>N</i>	29	82	31	13	3
		Agree		Undecided	Disagree	
	<i>N</i>	111		31	16	
	<i>%</i>	70.2 %		19.6 %	10.1 %	

As shown, the main ideas and opinions of the interviewees are presented in table 5.

Table 5
The Interviewees' Opinions on Methods

Participants	ELT Methods: Nature & Function
A	-Methods should not be seen as mere pedagogical tools in language learning. They are cultural constructs which are produced in the social and cultural atmosphere of the West and are prescribed to others. - So far, we have been only the consumers of their methods... we have this ability to be producers.
B	-Certainly methods are culturally, socially, and ideologically loaded. It is not deniable.....teachers should make sound decisions to be appropriate to the Iranian context.
C	-Methods are prescriptive, produced in the Center, but not appropriate to every situation. For example, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), it emphasizes oral skills and group work. Now I ask this question: can it be appropriate for the Iranian educational system? - We must not confine ourselves to the current methods, it is necessary to face them critically.
D	- For the present we have only the consumers of their methods and materials, but we can be more active in this part and even be producer.
E	-Methods should be studied in the history of methodology. We are living in the postmethod era. Confining ourselves to methods is absolutely wrong.
F	- It is not possible to reject them easily. We should apply the most appropriate and suitable ones according to our conditions.
G	- We should not restrict ourselves to their methods. For instance, I have proposed "ETS" (English Teaching Simulator) method as an innovative method applicable in Iranian context.
H	-We should follow the appropriate methods according to our needs and conditions. We can modify them. We should not accept them unquestioningly.
I	- I agree with you. They are culturally loaded. They are not correspondent to any situation.

These findings corresponded to the findings from the quantitative phase of study. All of participants, in spite of their different and even quite opposing views toward some issues in question, firstly did not see the current methods as the neutral and value-free instruments of ELT and secondly did not look at the mainstream methods which are produced in the English-speaking countries or the Inner-circle countries as the best

methods. In other words, all of them maintained that we should not limit ourselves to the current methods.

Materials and Curriculum Development

One of the givens of mainstream pedagogy refers to the belief that the best materials come from the Inner-Circle countries (Anderson, 2003). Pennycook (1994) introduces ELT materials as an enormous business worth vast some of money and Alptekin (2002), Canagarajah (1999), Gray (2002) McKay (2003) and Pennycook (2001) challenge the cultural and social and even pedagogical content of the Center-created materials. In this regard, Gray (2002), maintaining that one effect of globalization is the imposition of center materials on the periphery, reveals the "inclusivity" and "inappropriacy" of the global ELT course books widespread through the world.

Along with Canagarajah (1992) who raises serious questions about the relevance and appropriation of the teaching materials developed by the Anglo-American communities for periphery context, others including Pennycook (1994), Holliday (2005) and McKay (2003) believe that the involvement of the ELT professionals of the periphery in developing the ELT materials and textbooks is essential.

According to Anderson (2003), one of the important claims in the mainstream pedagogy is the transfer of the professionals and curriculum developers from the Center to the Periphery. But Toh (2003) asserts that the transfer of pedagogic expertise and personnel from the developed English speaking countries to other contexts is highly problematic especially, as Phillipson (1992), Pennycook (1994), and Canagarajah (1999) maintain when it comes under the banner of "technical assistance". In this regard, they raise serious questions about the role of English speaking countries' institutions like the British Council. For instance, Phillipson (1992) offers a serious critique of the activities of Western cultural organizations including British Council and United States Information Agency in the periphery.

Thus, to check the Iranian ELT professionals' attitude toward such issues, three questions were proposed and their findings shown in tables 6-8 indicate that 35.4 % of the ELT professionals agree and 45.5 % do not agree on this topic.

Table 6

Center-produced materials and Curriculums as the best

		Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
3- Teaching materials developed in native English speaking countries are the best materials for EFL learners including Iranian learners. <i>(liberalist)</i>	<i>N</i>	11	45	30	55	17
		Agree		Undecided	Disagree	
	<i>N</i>	56		30	72	
	<i>%</i>	35.4 %		18.9 %	45.5 %	

This finding is supported by the results of another question which 91% of Iranian ELT community support the involvement of Iranian ELT professionals in preparing and developing the materials and textbooks.

Table 7
Periphery's Involvement in Materials Development

4- The involvement of Iranian ELT professionals in preparing and developing materials and textbooks is necessary.		Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
	<i>N</i>	84	60	4	7	3
<i>(alarmist)</i>		Agree		Undecided	Disagree	
	<i>N</i>	144		4	10	
	<i>%</i>	91.1 %		2.5 %	6.3 %	

As table shows, 91% maintain that the Iranian ELT professionals and material developers should be involved in preparing the ELT materials.

Table 8
Center's Involvement in Curriculum Development

5- The development and managing of English language curricula and programs should be done by native countries.		Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
	<i>N</i>	15	30	38	58	17
<i>(liberalist)</i>		Agree		Undecided	Disagree	
	<i>N</i>	45		38	75	
	<i>%</i>	28.4 %		24 %	47.4 %	

As table shows, 28.4 % agree on the issue and 47.4 % do not. In the following table, the main ideas and opinions of the interviewees on this issue are presented:

Table 9
The interviewees' opinions on materials & curriculum development

<i>Participants</i>	<i>Material and Curriculum Development</i>
A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Unfortunately, issues like syllabus design, curriculum and material development are neglected in our educational system. As long as this situation exists, we are only the consumers of their biased products. - The books written by the Iranian writers are really disastrous. They are invalid. They have been provided through "cut & paste". Not attractive, not effective.
B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It is necessary to engage in materials development. We should face the inner- circle produced materials critically.
C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Developing our curriculum should be done by us in accordance with our social and cultural conditions. - our materials and curriculum as well as methods should be adopted and developed on the basis of our needs, goals and our social and cultural features. - We can and we should localize English. Localizing English may begin through materials. Here, we should attend to ethical, cultural and local values.
D	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Materials and textbooks, even those are prepared for international use, reflect the cultural aspects and values of the providers; the values which do not correspond to our cultural values and they have really negative effects. - We should develop our materials in accordance with our culture and values. Through this trend we are able to present our values. In other words we can localize English.
E	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It is necessary. We have such potential to develop our materials. In this part, we should localize English as soon as possible. - But, writing bad or insufficient books is more harmful than using center-produced ones. - Our national interests depend on localizing English and to achieve it the first step is to localize the materials.
F	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Our involvement in material development is essentially necessary. Sadly, paying much attention to some theoretical aspects of ELT has been detained us from some applied or practical issues like material development.
G	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Materials should be developed in Iran, but through a scientific and systematic way. - According to our goals and needs, English should be localized and its first step is localizing the materials.

Cont. Table 9	
H	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Certainly, they represent their values. But we should be familiar with their values and culture. - Regarding materials development, it is demanding, but it seems necessary to localize them.
I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It is necessary to revise the current situation. Concerning the material development we have two choices. Providing them ourselves and it is really difficult because the lack of experienced professionals in this part is obvious and inviting the significant materials developers like Jack C. Richard to develop some books on the basis of our needs, conditions and our cultural, social, historical and geographical features. - We must review and rectify the current syllabuses. We should localize them.

Reviewing the ideas presented in table 9 showed that all of the interviewees, despite their different attitudes and experiences, believed that, first of all, the materials produced in the Inner-circle were not the best ones, then, the involvement of the Iranian ELT professionals in materials and curriculum development was essential.

Native vs. Nonnative Teachers, Standards and Varieties

While the mainstream pedagogy advocates that the ideal teacher is the English "native speaker" and the educational institutions would benefit from employing such teachers and teaching professionals, Phillipson (1992) names this idea as "native speaker fallacy" which in Canagarajah's (1999) words, monopolizes the ELT teaching jobs in the periphery and Pennycook (1994) introduces it as one important aspect of the cultural and economic politics of ELT, which forms an integral part of the industrialization of ELT.

In addition, the mainstream pedagogy strongly insists on native speaker standards especially in pronunciation, while the critical linguists including Phillipson (1992), Brutt-Griffler (2002), Rajagopalan (2004), and Holliday (2005) challenge this notion. Rajagopalan (2004) clearly asserts that English in its current status or as he calls it "World English" cannot be restricted to the native-speaker standards. Moreover, Brutt-Griffler (2002) notes that different varieties of English should not be ignored in ELT. With respect to this issue, three questions were included in the questionnaire. The findings indicate that only 17.7 % agree with "native speaker tenet" and 63.2 % disagree.

Table 10
Native speaker tenet

		Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
6- The ideal teacher is the English native speaker from one of the English speaking countries. <i>(liberalist)</i>	<i>N</i>	11	17	30	70	30
		Agree		Undecided	Disagree	
	<i>N</i>	28		30	100	
	<i>%</i>	17.7 %		18.9 %	63.2 %	

Concerning the second question which deals with the American and British standards, the results show a tendency toward the mainstream pedagogy:

Table 11
Standard Pronunciation

		Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
7- British and American native speaker standards especially in pronunciation should be the only standards of ELT in Iran. <i>(liberalist)</i>	<i>N</i>	29	63	27	32	7
		Agree		Undecided	Disagree	
	<i>N</i>	92		27	39	
	<i>%</i>	58.2 %		17.1 %	24.6 %	

As shown, 58.1 % of the respondents believe that the British and American native speaker standards should be the only standards in ELT in our society.

For the third question regarding the varieties of English, 44.8 % believe that English varieties should not be taught in education and only 34 % maintain that they should be taught in ELT.

Table 12
World Englishes

8- Different varieties of English like Indian English, Pakistani English, Singaporean English and numerous others should be considered and taught in Iran. <i>(alarmist)</i>		Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
	<i>N</i>	15	39	33	48	23
		Agree		Undecided	Disagree	
	<i>N</i>	54		33	71	
	<i>%</i>	34.1%		20.8 %	44.9 %	

Findings acquired from the interviews are as following:

Table 13
The Interviewees' Opinions on Nateness

<i>Participants</i>	<i>Native vs. Nonnative Teachers, Standards & Varieties</i>
A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It has been proven that non-native teachers are mostly better and efficient than natives. It has been a conscious plan conducted by some organizations like British Council to introduce their ideal teachers to other societies. - It is not necessary to stress only British and American pronunciation, but we should follow some standards.
B	-Today, concerning the Kachru's model, the number of non-native-English speakers is more than the natives, so English as an international language should not be confined to specific standards of the natives. "Intelligibility" is more important than "native-ness" or "near native-ness".
C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There are some fallacies and "native speaker" is one of them. Even I say that there is no consensus around the meaning of native speaker. We should have a critical view toward such notions. - The superiority of native speaker teachers is an aspect of linguistic imperialism. - Paying much attention to American or British pronunciation is wrong.

Cont. Table 13	
D	<p>-Certainly, teaching these norms should not be the same for everyone. We should see the needs of the learners. For a student majoring English or for EFL teacher trainees, teaching American and British pronunciation is necessary, but for groups like businessmen or tourists, it is not necessary to insist on these standards.</p> <p>- Paying attention to, for example, "RP" (received pronunciation) is wasting time and money.</p>
E	<p>- I strongly insist that in "production" we should only use American and British pronunciation, because they have the most intelligibility, but in "reception" we should be familiar with other varieties like Indian English.</p> <p>- Native speaker superiority is a fallacy.</p>
F	<p>- Certainly the American and British English are more preferable.</p> <p>- Personally, I do not believe that native teachers are better than non-natives.</p>
G	<p>- English should not be taught as a foreign language. It should be taught as an international language. Today English has turned to an international language in the world and in this situation we should follow the international norms not solely its American or British forms.</p>
H	<p>- We should follow American or British. Because they are known as global norms. In addition, we cannot teach all varieties of English, we should teach the ones which are the norms.</p> <p>- At the same time our familiarity with other varieties is good.</p>
I	<p>- "Native teacher" is a fallacy. It is proven that a native speaker does not have the enough requirements.</p> <p>- In production we should follow the most intelligible ones, British or American, but we should not emphasize them enthusiastically. In reception we should attend all common forms.</p>

The findings related to the first question in this category showed that all the interviewees maintained that the ideal teacher could not be a native speaker from the Inner-circle countries. In other words, respecting this question, the findings from both phases were corresponding.

Regarding the second question, while the interviewees B, C and D maintained that the British and American native standards should not be the only standards, the interviewees A, E, F, G and I maintained that, especially in "production", only such standards should be followed. In this part, the interviewees C and D clearly asserted that the needs analysis of the learners should be the main criterion. For example, the interviewee D asserted that those standards should be observed and followed by English trainers and teachers but not necessary to be observed by those like businessmen who learn English for some professional purposes.

The findings from the third question in the qualitative phase tend partially to the liberalist camp. While the interviewees B, C and E maintained that we should be familiar with other varieties and B and C even maintained that they should be taught in our educational system, A, E and H strongly maintained that in "production", it is necessary to teach and learn only the American and British standards and in "reception" being familiar with other varieties might be useful. Of course, D and G, who did not agree with teaching other varieties and mostly tended to English as an international language (EIL), maintained that teaching English as an international language could be a solution to this controversy.

English, ELT and Cultures

One of the most controversial facets of globalization in ELT is the relationship between this language and culture. In this regard, Wilson (2005) states that cultural homogenization or in many cases Americanization, is a controversial aspect of globalization in ELT. While Crystal (1997) clearly asserts that different cultures throughout the world can exist along with the global spread of English, the scholars belonging to the linguistic imperialism camp of thought including Phillipson (1992), Pennycook (1994, 2001 and 2007), Tsuda (1994), Aleptekin (2002) and Canagarajah (1999) maintain that the spread of English threatens different cultures in the world. Alptekin (2002) believes that ELT is "enculturation" in which the learner acquires new cultural frames of reference and a new worldview, reflecting those of the target language culture and its speakers. Pennycook (2001) maintains that education in general and ELT in particular cannot be considered as culturally neutral activities. Canagarajah (1999) demonstrates the cultural load of ELT practices developed in the Center. In this regard, he maintains that English spread especially through ELT strengthens the cultural hegemony of the Center. Pennycook (2007) introduces the impact of English culture so great that clearly asserts that we must rethink the relationship between English, pedagogy and culture within the contemporary world. Dua (1994) writes that the USA looks at the promotion of English as one of its objectives of cultural policy. In his words, the developing countries are responsible for the expansion of English and ELT through depending on the UK and the USA for financial assistance and planning expertise and the failure to take any independent decisions related to language planning. He believes that this unequal relationship with the developed nations has made the developing nations accept cultural and educational dependency as part of their existence and reality.

Thus, to check the Iranian ELT professionals' attitudes toward this important issue, two questions were prepared.

Table 14
English and ELT Threat to Persian Culture

		Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
9-English and ELT can constitute a threat to the Persian culture. <i>(alarmist)</i>	<i>N</i>	3	13	25	64	53
		Agree		Undecided	Disagree	
	<i>N</i>	16		25	117	
	<i>%</i>	10.1 %		15.8 %	74.1 %	

Looking at the results reveal that only 10.1 % of the respondents agree that English and ELT can threaten the Persian culture and 74.1 % disagree. Regarding the other question, the results seem different:

Table 15
The Expansion of Center's Cultural Influence Through English and ELT

		Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
10- ELT and the spread of English play a key role in the expansion of cultural influence of English speaking countries especially US. <i>(alarmist)</i>	<i>N</i>	17	77	24	32	8
		Agree		Undecided	Disagree	
	<i>N</i>	94		24	40	
	<i>%</i>	59.5 %		15.1 %	25.3 %	

As it is seen in this question, 59.5 % of the respondents agree that the spread of English and ELT plays a key role in the expansion of cultural influences of the Center. Referring to the ideas presented in the interviews might be enlightening:

Table 16
The Interviewees' Opinions on English, ELT and Culture

<i>Participants</i>	<i>English, ELT and Cultures</i>
A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - English has not been deculturalized. So, it is mostly a tool for Anglo-American civilization to manifest itself. - We should increase our cultural sensitivities or cultural awareness to be immune against English cultural threats.
B	- "Critical awareness" is a necessity. It should be penetrated and spread in every aspect of our lives, decisions, and thoughts. In such a condition, we can stand against the cultural threats of English.
C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Language and culture are interwoven and English is not an exception. Facing its cultural elements and effects, first of all we should increase our cultural awareness. - They have spread English to spread their political and cultural dominance. - We can localize English. Learning English should be different from Americanization.
D	- Its cultural influence is not deniable. Currently only we hide its effects like sweeping trash under the carpet!
E	- Different aspects of ELT can threaten our culture.....for example, English institutes.....I strongly assert that they are the most important symbols of linguistic and cultural imperialism in our society.
F	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Learning any language involves paying some costs. To learn English we should pay them. Every society pays them, - I cannot deny its effects. But they are not so problematic. There are some tools including media which are more dangerous.
G	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The signs of cultural assaults of the West have been completely evident in ELT. - Undoubtedly, ELT has affected our culture. Its signs are now evident. For example, we can see its signs at the private sector.
H	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Language is not devoid of culture and ideology. - English spread has been more harmful to cultures than languages. - Today, the western culture is interwoven with English. Its spread has not been limited to language, but its culture. - It is necessary to say that knowing western culture is different from following it. Moreover, some aspects of this culture including endeavor, perseverance and creativity are admirable.

Cont. Table 16	
I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - English is filled with western culture; its culture is not independent of English. - Its culture is really affecting us, for example, the private sector does not teach English, but culture. The situation is really unsettled. - Its effects is global. I maintain that the best way to resist against its culture is to strengthen Persian culture.

Reviewing the ideas obtained from the interviews revealed that all of them maintained that there were different and even opposing cultural differences between the Iranian culture and the Inner-circle's culture. Facing these findings, it was revealed that on the cultural influences of English and ELT on other cultures including Persian there was not any correspondence between two phases of the study. While the entire interviewees saw the English as a threat to cultures throughout the world and agreed on its tie with the Western culture, the participants in the second phase of study mostly tended to the liberalist position. Thus in the following section, its probable causes will be discussed.

Discussion and Conclusion

This study as an attempt to reveal and investigate the attitudes of Iranian ELT community on the current status of ELT in the globalizing world was conducted to fill the obvious gap of studies in this important scope. To do it, we tried to deal with this issue through a mixed-method study and its findings were presented in the former section. Here, to deal with the findings to the point and to present a vivid picture of the Iranian perspective on this issue, the researchers try to discuss and survey the causes.

Undoubtedly, the important position of methods in ELT profession is obvious. As Richards and Renandya (2002) write, for much of the twenty century a primary concern of the language teaching profession was to find more effective methods of language teaching. In addition, the great enthusiasm for Center-produced methods especially in the Periphery has been evident in recent decades (Brown, 2002).

Justifying the respondents' critical views toward the methods, the researchers believe that the explanations of the interviewee E may be really revealing. Borrowing Kumaravadivelu's term, he introduced the present time as the "postmethod era", which the attention has shifted from methods to language teaching pedagogy. It seems that the Iranian ELT society, at least at higher levels, is experiencing such a transition. To deal with this shift, certainly reviewing the possible causes of method demise and its corresponding with our conditions is necessary. Enumerating the possible causes of method demise, Brown (ibid.) classifies them in four cases as follows: (a) being prescriptive, (b) being quite distinctive at the early and indistinguishable from each other at later stages, (c) not being empirically tested by scientific and empirical validation, and (d) being quasi-political and mercenary agendas of the Center and the vehicles of linguistic imperialism targeting the disempowered Periphery.

The analysis of the opinions presented in the interviews revealed that the above-mentioned causes have been noted more or less by the interviewees. In a more precise word, their cultural loads, insufficiencies, prescriptiveness, etc. were among the causes mentioned by them. We can say that they did not see the insufficiency of the methods in a

same way, but among the causes, methods' cultural loads and lack of correspondence to our setting, needs and goals had been the main causes. The common point in their opinions was that the Center methods could not be necessarily the best ones, and it is necessary to deal with the needs, goals as well as our social and cultural conditions. Of course, their teaching experiences and probably the challenges or inadequate results they had experienced, should not be ignored, too.

In fact, facing these findings we can conclude that Canagarajah's(2002) words in periphery the raise of questions about the cultural relevance and appropriateness of the methods is true for the Iranian society as a periphery communities.

Regarding the second category which dealt with the materials and curriculum development, seeing the results which were clearly in line with the critical attitudes on the topic, the researchers tried to deal with its causes. In this part, certainly the opinions presented by the interviewees in the qualitative phase were really revealing. Their main reasons in rejecting this claim of the mainstream pedagogy were the lack of relevance and appropriateness of the Center-produced materials. Almost all of them questioned the cultural and social aspects of those materials. In their views, while such materials are mostly publicized as those appropriate for international use, they are really Center-oriented. In other words, they do not meet the basic requirements of appropriate materials. In this part, the cultural and social differences between the Iranian and the Western society may play an essential role.

It is really noticeable that all of them maintained that our involvement in materials development was necessary. From their opinions, we should not be the mere consumers of their products and we should be the producers of our materials. Their focus on cultural and social inappropriateness of Center-produced materials was remarkable and it could be a warning for our language planners. For example, the interviewee D whose ideas were, in her words, moderate clearly called for a reengineering in this area. In her words, this area can be the first step in localizing English.

Equally worthy of mention is that, in spite of their objection against the Center-produced materials, almost all of them believed that the materials developed so far in our country could not meet our needs and goals at all. Of course, they agreed that, at least at the moment, we could produce our needs ourselves.

Concerning the curriculum development, the researchers faced similar results. In other words, the interviewees were unanimous that we had such ability to develop our curricula in accordance with our social and cultural conditions, needs and goals. In this regard, it was interesting that the interviewee E, clearly criticizing the presence of some curriculum developers in some well-known English language institutes in cities like Tehran, warned us of the threats of such an event.

Undoubtedly, causes including their personal teaching experiences (like A, C, F & D), their studies or expertise in materials development (like C, D, E & G) and their cultural awareness or sensitivities (like B, E & I) have been determinative.

All in all, the findings from the first phase of study correspond to the findings obtained from the second phase of study. In other words, respecting the nature and functions of material and curriculum development, the Iranian ELT community strongly tends to the linguistic imperialism front.

In this regard, it seems that Canagarajah's (2002) belief that "although global coursework are designed for the teaching of English language, they are also highly wrought

cultural constructs and carriers of cultural messages" (p. 151) is believed by the Iranian ELT community.

Concerning the third category, namely native vs. nonnative issues which included three statements, while we saw that regarding the first one, the Iranian ELT community strongly tended to the critical standpoint, with respect to the two other statements the consensus was not as significant as the first one. Facing this situation, the researchers tried to find its causes. In their opinion, being non-native teachers themselves might be an important reason for their tendencies toward the superiority of non-native teachers. Moreover, their experiences can be introduced as another reason. For instance, the interviewee C, providing his experiences in teaching English in two foreign countries in Asia and Europe, tried to show the feebleness of this current idea belonging to the liberalist camp of thought. Four others, namely A, E, G and I clearly called this liberalist tenet as "native speaker fallacy".

Regarding the second and third questions, the researchers think that the expertise and interests of interviewees E, G and I, namely "teacher education" can be the main reason for their native-based view. Of course, the proficiency of the interviewees might affect their views, too.

In fact, findings from this phase of study as well as the quantitative phase indicate that for the Iranian ELT community, the Inner-circle standards in pronunciation as well as the Standard English sound very important. Seemingly, on the one hand, such a tendency can be partly attributed to the position of English in Iranian society as a foreign language (EFL) (see Shirazizadeh and Momenian, 2009) and on the other hand, might be related to this fact that some concepts including World Englishes, English as a lingua franca (ELF), peripheral varieties, etc. do not have any notable position in ELT trend in Iran.

It is necessary to note that regarding these two issues, namely the British or American standards in pronunciation and the position of nonstandard varieties of English in ELT trend, findings of Aghaei (2009) verify the findings of this part of research.

Concerning the fourth category dealing with the influence and interaction of English, ELT and culture, it is worth to discuss the findings in more details. Facing these findings, it was revealed that on the cultural influences of English and ELT on other cultures including Persian there was not any correspondence between two phases of the study. While the entire interviewees saw the English as a threat to cultures throughout the world and agreed on its tie with the Western culture, the participants in the second phase of study mostly tended to the liberalist position.

Before dealing with this issue, it is necessary to note that in this category, among the interviewees, as mentioned, only F partially tended to the liberalist camp. Not denying the cultural influences of English and ELT, he maintained that such an influence is inevitable. In his words, in spite of their cultural impacts they could not be seen as serious threats to Persian culture.

Encountering this situation, the researchers tried to study the effects of the first phase participants' academic degree as a variable on their attitudes on this issue. Regarding the first question in this category, dealing with English and ELT threats to other cultures including Persian, it is notable that of 23 participants with PhD degree, 11 agreed on the issue, 6 disagreed and 6 were undecided. In other words, while 74.1% of the respondents in the second phase of study were opposite to this alarmist position, this rate among the participants with PhD degree was only 20%. In fact their attitudes were correspondent to their counterparts in the first phase of study. Seeing these findings, the researchers were

convinced that the perception of the respondents with MA degree was different from ones with PhD. In a more precise word, the higher the professionals' academic degree, the more sensitive to the cultural aspects and effects of English and ELT.

Professionally speaking, the findings acquired for the purpose of this study suggest that there is a growing critical recognition of ELT among the Iranian ELT professionals. In other words, conducting this research, the researchers can clearly assert that the Iranian ELT community is experiencing a conceptual shift in this arena. The attitudes presented in this study as well as some applied linguists' awareness of dramatic changes and concepts in the ELT profession like World Englishes, linguistic imperialism, localizing English, critical pedagogy, etc. are really promising and can broaden the scope of ELT research in terms of the number and depth of the topics.

Pedagogical Implications

To date, very few large-scale studies on the topic have been conducted in Iran. Thus, this study as a new one covering some important categories enjoys several implications for language policy makers, educational institutions, ELT professionals, practitioners and teachers as well as materials and curriculum developers. In this section we try to briefly deal with them.

As Nunan (2003) writes, the emergence of English as a global language is going to seriously influence language planning and policy making in every society and certainly the Iranian society is not an exception. It seems that regarding this very significant topic which has been the obsession of many countries' authorities throughout the world, the decision and policy makers in our society have taken a passive position. In fact, the current study and its findings may have some important implications for language policy makers and language planners at the governmental level. Understanding the status and role of English in the globalizing world, its impacts on our language, culture and identity, etc., and its challenges and opportunities, the policy makers and language planners should think strategically when setting their priorities and making decisions on the topic.

Educational institutions including schools and higher education institutions should place more emphasis on the issue. Attending to the goals and priorities of English learning in our society, which in turn should be set by the language policy makers and language planners, paying more attention to the needs analysis of the learners especially at the higher education, adopting the suitable methodology and practices, and having a critical review of the principles and methods underlying the current curriculum, etc. can be the first necessary steps in this arena.

ELT professionals, practitioners, and teachers as the key players in the field of English teaching should notice of this fact that they should not restrict ELT to some mere pedagogical issues and must look at it from a very wider perspective. Findings of this study clearly suggest that they should face English and ELT more critically, consciously and comprehensively.

Last but not the least, the material and curriculum developers are among those who can profit the research findings.

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Appendix 1

Interview Questions

(a) *Methods:*

- It is usually said that the best teaching methods come from native English speaking countries. What is your idea?
- Are the current ELT methods neutral and appropriate for our society?

(b) *Materials and Curriculum Development:*

- What is your idea about the in/appropriateness of Center-produced materials?
- What do you think of the Periphery's involvement in ELT materials and curriculum development?

(c) *Native vs. Nonnative Teachers, Standards and Varieties:*

- It is often said that the best or ideal teacher is a native English speaker? What's your idea?
- Should we follow only the standard pronunciations including American or British and neglect other varieties?

(d) *English, ELT and Cultures:*

- Does English endanger Persian culture or not?
- What is the relation between English and western culture?
- Does ELT have any role in spreading Center's culture in the world?

in Iran.					
9- English and ELT can constitute a threat to the Persian culture.					
10- ELT and the spread of English play a key role in the expansion of cultural influence of English speaking countries especially US.					

About the Authors

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