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Research Paper

## World Englishes Paradigm and ESP in Universities: A Study of Iranian TEFL and ESP Teachers' Attitudes

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### Abstract

Exploring the disciplinary interface between English for specific purposes (ESP) and World Englishes (WEs), regarding the potential contributions of both disciplines to research on areas of shared interest, including TEFL and ESP, Teachers' attitudes are the center of the current study. This investigation examines Iranian EFL and ESP teachers' views on integrating WEs into ESP classes and assesses the English-speaking needs of ESP students. The study comprised 32 TEFL, 17 EFL, and 15 ESP teachers (16 male and 16 females, aged 30–67), using a sequential explanatory mixed-methods approach with quantitative questionnaires. Analysis of the data showed that subjects in both groups largely held remarkably positive views on WEs and felt ESP teaching should align with student objectives. More than two-thirds of participants disliked the current ESP syllabuses; however, only ESP teachers were unhappy with the teaching methods, cultural content, and textbook. The participants also showed complete dissatisfaction with their ESP students' speaking abilities. It can be inferred that the ESP course does not fully prepare the students to embark on their studies because it does not sufficiently consider learners' speaking needs.

**Keywords:** Attitude, EFL, ESP, TEFL, World Englishes

الگوی جهانی زبان انگلیسی و زبان‌های خارجی (ESP) در دانشگاه‌ها: مطالعه‌ای بر نگرش‌های معلمان ایرانی زبان انگلیسی برای اهداف خاص (TEFL) و زبان‌های خارجی (ESP)  
با بررسی وجه اشتراک رشته‌های بین زبان انگلیسی برای اهداف خاص (ESP) و زبان‌های خارجی انگلیسی (WE)، با توجه به سهم بالقوه هر دو رشته در تحقیق در زمینه‌های مورد علاقه مشترک، از جمله TEFL و ESP، نگرش معلمان محور مطالعه حاضر است. این تحقیق دیدگاه‌های معلمان ایرانی زبان انگلیسی به عنوان زبان خارجی و زبان‌های خارجی (ESP) را در مورد ادغام زبان‌های خارجی به کلاس‌های ESP بررسی می‌کند و نیازهای زبان انگلیسی زبانان ESP را ارزیابی می‌کند. این مطالعه شامل ۳۲ معلم زبان انگلیسی به عنوان زبان خارجی، ۱۷ معلم زبان انگلیسی به عنوان زبان خارجی و ۱۵ معلم زبان خارجی (۱۶ مرد و ۱۶ زن، ۳۰ تا ۶۷ ساله) با استفاده از یک رویکرد ترکیبی توضیحی متوالی با پرسشنامه‌های کمی بود. تجزیه و تحلیل داده‌ها نشان داد که آزمودنی‌های هر دو گروه تا حد زیادی دیدگاه‌های مثبت قابل توجهی در مورد زبان‌های خارجی داشتند و احساس می‌کردند که تدریس زبان خارجی باید با اهداف دانش‌آموزان همسو باشد. بیش از دو سوم شرکت‌کنندگان از سرفصل‌های فعلی ESP خوششان نیامد؛ با این حال، تنها مدرسان ESP از روش‌های تدریس، محتوای فرهنگی و کتاب درسی ناراضی بودند. شرکت‌کنندگان همچنین از توانایی‌های گفتاری دانشجویان ESP خود کاملاً ناراضی بودند. می‌توان استنباط کرد که دوره ESP دانشجویان را به طور کامل برای شروع تحصیل آماده نمی‌کند زیرا به اندازه کافی نیازهای گفتاری زبان‌آموزان را در نظر نمی‌گیرد.  
کلمات کلیدی: نگرش، EFL، ESP، TEFL، انگلیسی‌های جهان



## Introduction

Among 7100 spoken and sign languages, the English language has the largest expansion in the world, which is because of economic and then political factors. The mentioned factors created the expansion of science and technology in harmony with each other. In science and technology, language and listening, writing, reading and speaking skills are the most important means of communication and science transmission.

The reason ESP emerged as essential units in universities is the need to exchange information and why English conversation and listening is not given as much importance as reading and writing, maybe it goes back to the type of communication and its limitations in the past and the initial view that completeness in the language was close to the standard language, this issue is still important among many languages' researchers.

However, most researchers believe that in using the English language, complying with the needs in the shortest possible time is more important than approaching the standard language (Crystal, 2003). Today, speaking English, among other language skills, has become more important for ESP learners because of the ease and speed of information transfer.

The goal of language learners in scientific and technical universities is to convey scientific findings or material easily by speaking in the shortest possible time in formal or friendly meetings, scientific and specialized seminars, and even in teaching at universities. In ESP courses, learners' needs are at two levels of language knowledge.

The first is the scientific needs or level, which are mostly in English, and it is preferable to translate them word for word into the mother tongue, it may not be cost-effective, and such an issue is not comprehensible in communication, and the second is the language needs, which are rooted in cultural understanding, which cannot be easily transferred in a language training course or a few educational units of the university in short time and it is not reading or writing alone. University English teachers in Iran comprise two groups: professional English teachers and those teaching English for Specific Purposes in science, technology, medicine, paramedical fields, and language institutes. ESP teachers and students in Iran have always faced deficiencies in ESP courses. Many studies show that the ESP educational program is based on reading, writing, and learning specialized words of these two skills, which is not enough, and according to the research, it has not satisfied the students and teachers (Faraji et al., 2023). Re-evaluating English instruction, prioritizing the specific needs of learners, and acknowledging the role of universities as hubs of academic and cultural interaction causes a localized approach.

Over 50 years, English varieties have been considered seriously in language teaching (Y. Kachru, 2008). English teachers and students desire to return from thinking of learning or teaching English as a theoretical issue toward understanding it as a set of related, structurally overlapping, intra-language linguistic but also distinct varieties, the products of a fundamental "glocalization" process with variable, context-dependent outcomes.

Yamat et al. (2011), who investigated the role of general background in the success of ESP courses in Iranian Universities, explored that course designers and material developers should have revised their old tradition of 'being just specific to teach specific' and that they can invest more GE, especially at earlier stages. He further explains that they may define a threshold level of GE upon which an ESP course could be built. The writer believes if (at least) the general knowledge of WEs, under the pressing needs of WEs recognition, is hence essential to insert in the ESP course scheme. Because of the shift paradigm of teaching only the native standard.

The rise of World Englishes in the past half-century, facilitating swift communication among local users across diverse fields, and its global prevalence, can mitigate ESP teaching challenges. Teachers' views undeniably affect how readily educational changes are accepted



(Tamimi Saad, 2018). A teacher's initial professional training subtly influences their teaching style, focus, student learning, communication, and students' future careers (Borg, 2015).

This is clear from the widely spreading World Englishes (WEs), which are now articulated and discussed through the education curriculum. Because of the expanding WEs concept, there is a shift in the paradigm in teaching English, which also follows. The growth inevitably impinges on the course design of English Language Teaching, creating a steady flow of new ideas and programs.

The rationale for introducing WEs to ESP students is persuasive. With Englishes and constant growth in ELT practice in EFL and ESL, the position of World Englishes (WEs) has been confirmed. Therefore, this research has examined the difference in the opinions of two groups of teachers regarding the presence of WEs in their English language teaching courses, the group that teaches specialized English, TEFL and the group that teaches the language for specific purposes, ESP, and find the purpose of teaching it in their attitudes as well as in the educational planning policies for ESP. And which group's attitude is closer to changing the ESP education process and including WEs in syllabus design?

The dearth of research studies on such an important issue as the global status of English and the attitudes toward it highlighted the current research. Hopefully, the findings can be enlightening to scholars looking forward to hearing more of the views of teachers of English from an expanding circle context (Y. Kachru, 2008).

### **Problem**

English is a highly relevant language in technology, industry, science, and commerce, with an increasing number of users (Nezaratgoo & Behzadpoor, 2017). Because of natural preservers, Iranians have been one of the earliest adopters of the English language, which is taught in universities, schools, and private language centers (Sadeghi & Richards, 2016). Over time, the English language has evolved to meet the changing needs of local communities. Historically, ESP has posed an ongoing challenge (Bolton & Jenks, 2022). One challenge is participating in English conversations during university seminars, lectures, and student-researcher discussions. Current educational programs cannot meet students' increased need for fast and effective communication in our technologically advanced world (Mazdayasna & Tahririan, 2008).

Considering English learners' needs, along with those of native speakers and instructors, we must re-evaluate how we approach English conversation, particularly within academic settings (Yamat et al., 2011). Recent studies reviewed show WEs effectiveness in ESP students' oral conversations (Bolton & Jenks, 2022). However, the most important aspect needing investigation is the impact of English teachers' attitudes on the use of WEs in ESP classes.

### **Purpose of the Study**

Today, ESP is a broad and varied field of study that welcomes a WEs perspective (Bolton & Jenks, 2022). The deficiency in speaking skills among ESP students highlights the immediate need for implementing WEs resources in their contexts of study and work. The rise of World Englishes (WEs) underscores the crucial role of local needs in ESP, prompting a reevaluation of their place in Iranian ELT programs, as argued by Khodareza and Efaf Soltani (2020). Instead of promoting British or American English as the standard, many post-graduate students in various scientific fields in Iran must communicate effectively with colleagues to learn English as a pluricentric language (Khodareza & Efaf Soltani, 2020). Teacher attitudes as needs analysts are crucial in ESP teaching, adapting instruction for professional or academic settings beyond traditional classrooms. The question of shifting attitudes toward world Englishes in Iran to meet local needs is currently being debated by researchers.



### **Significance of the study**

Examining Iranian TEFL teachers' attitudes toward teaching world Englishes in ESP courses, and comparing the world Englishes conceptualization of TEFL vs. ESP teachers will show where ESP is what actions is necessary to be done for ESP students current needs.

Teaching method and expecting language changes that have occurred because of language application in IT, electronics, technology, and research..., can lead to new language speaking needs. Free English learning or learning with this theory that we should use standard language, block using the learnt language. Outcomes of this study will be informative for ESP learners who are expected to speak English fluently in the work domain without anxiety of speaking standard English like native speakers. The goal of ESP is to equip learners to communicate effectively. (Yamat et al., 2011) considers if the students of ESP should have known WEs before they come in contact with people in the work field, with self-confidence, they can use all the levels of their language knowledge in order to transfer or increase the level of their specialized knowledge. In the ESP course, the aim is not learning language; it is using the language for learning or conveying learning professionally.

It is useful for curriculum developers, ELT planners, teacher educators, and policymakers in TEFL. Current research helps them to take WEs paradigm more seriously in according to students' needs in educational categories and to provide faster, provoking and newer methods for teaching it because of its prevalence in professional communication.

### **Review of Literature**

#### **ESP Teaching and Courses' Problems**

The rising demand for ESP courses over the past ten years has spurred significant research and publication internationally; Iran (Mazdayasna & Tahririan, 2008), Greece (Chostelidou, 2010), and Turkey (Ulucay & Demirel, 2011). In 2008, Mazdayasna and Tahririan investigated the foreign language requirements of Iranian undergraduate medical students (nursing and midwifery) via interviews and questionnaires. ESP courses proved less effective than expected and failed to meet learners' needs, they realized. They concluded that most Iranian ESP courses lacked specialist consultation and needs assessments. Taiwan's ESP courses similarly showed discrepancies between student needs and course content, as revealed by Kim et al. (2017).

A 2010 Greek study by Chostelidou emphasized the importance of developing a specialized English course focusing on the target discipline to meet learners' specific needs. Participants' dissatisfaction with their skills often leads to criticism of ESP courses for not fulfilling their intended purpose.

#### **Teaching WEs and its Effects in EIL**

Schneider (2007) reports that English was the world's most used language in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, officially and unofficially. For transnational communication, English is the standard. B. B. Kachru (1992) posited a two-flow model for the global expansion of English. The first wave saw English spreading from its native lands, such as North America, to new areas; subsequently, those trained in English carried it to new environments. The first flow, presented by B.B. Kachru (1992), happened in the Inner Circle, while the second flow was the case with the other circles and involved processes of nativization of English. From initial contact, English has evolved into new, stable, localized varieties in numerous countries, influenced by indigenous languages. These varieties are all labeled "World Englishes". A new branch of linguistics, World Englishes (WEs), has emerged since the 1980s, studying how Englishes are used and their features, which were previously categorized as native, second, or foreign based on their location. Despite geographical, historical, and social differences, the emergence of these new varieties shows amazing





similarities rooted in educational policy, sociolinguistic accommodation, and scientific language transformations. Local and other languages have always been important everywhere (Bolton & Jenks, 2022). Anchimbe's (2009) view of World Englishes as a "Naming Disease" is itself a fascinating topic for contemporary discussion. Some experts view English as a lingua franca and a form of international language, suggesting it as an alternative to ESOL (English for speakers of other languages). Jenkins (2012) argues that international English encompasses local English varieties spoken by nonnative speakers, including native speakers. To clarify, Bolton (2019) provides three related interpretations of "World Englishes": the first views it as an overarching term for all English varieties, including World English, International English, and Global English. The less significant second category includes distinct new Englishes from Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean, also known as Nativized, Indigenized, or Institutionalized English. The third category focuses on Kachru's approach to studying English.

### **Standard English (SE) and Ownership of the English Language**

Although some scholars discredit the nativeness versus non-nativeness distinction, Halliday (2009) notes that it remains a fundamental criterion for categorizing English speakers in non-native English-speaking countries. A related issue with Standard English is its separation of native and non-native speakers, and the claim of its superiority to other varieties of English in non-native countries. Numerous researchers criticize the SE for underestimating non-native local norms and being monocentric by over-relying on American or British norms.

McKay (2016) contrasts a monocentric English model with a pluricentric one. In the monolithic approach, native speakers hold authority as language models for learners. In contrast, the latter model emphasizes language change driven by users' needs, leading to diverse English varieties because of its widespread use. The native versus non-native language difference (Smith, 2014) refutes the notion of British or American ownership and authority over English language standards. Phillipson (1992) also asserted the concept of linguisticism. The connection between linguisticism and the international/intranational English varieties stems from the existence of intralingual and inter-lingual linguisticism. Linguisticism between speakers of different languages, especially when a prestigious variety is involved, is inter-lingual; within a single language, it is intra-lingual.

Regarding the global versus local uses of English, McKay (2016) argues that its international use transcends Inner Circle cultures. English is the dominant mode of communication in such professional contexts; it is still not true that all interactants need to be governed by a set of uniform native standards. Gilsdorf (2002) contends that Standard English is a dynamic concept.

Globally, the distinctions between Outer and Expanding Circle English contexts are increasingly unclear due to various social and historical factors (Bolton, 2019).

### **General Attitudes toward SE, EIL, and Ownership of the English Language**

English facilitates communication. Focusing on just one English variety in class might lead students to believe it is the only correct one, harming their confidence and attitudes when interacting internationally, even if it is the most common variety in that setting (Matsuda, 2012). Selecting World Englishes in universities is crucial because it educates students about global English variations and can raise awareness beforehand. Including both standard and local Englishes in the classroom helps English language learners understand the variety of World Englishes and their own local English (Baumgardner, 1987). The current distribution of English speakers provides clues to ownership. English speakers' identity, the future of EIL, and linguistic and cultural models for teaching EIL have been explored by the EIL. Moreover, recognizing English's global spread and its resulting structural shifts helps users, learners, and teachers



identify potential communication breakdowns in international and intercultural EIL contexts (Sadeghpour & Sharifian, 2017). She explained that this awareness helps EIL users understand the diverse structures of English and prioritize intelligibility in international communication.

A significant amount of discussion has challenged the native versus non-native speaker categorization (McKay, 2016). Phillipson (1992, p. 185) critiques the “native speaker fallacy” in ‘Linguistic Imperialism’, highlighting how the native/non-native distinction can lead to native speaker control and oppression of non-native speakers. Jenkins (2003) argues that ELT must adhere to the norms used by the most prevalent EAL speakers. She continues by stating that English is neither a foreign nor a second language; thus, learners need not emulate any nation’s norms to master it.

The English language played a vital role in the dissemination of technology. No other languages were available as technology boomed and was adopted culturally by sufficient nations. English’s expanding global use, fueled by various factors, has led to geographical, demographical, and structural shifts within EIL. Qualitative research from Iranian universities explores the impact of ownership and standard language arguments on Iranian EFL learners in the expanding circle. Iranian English speakers express their opinions on World Englishes (WEs) and Standard English (SE), and discuss their sense of ownership over English, and how this impacts their proficiency in ESP (Ananisarab & Monfared, 2016).

### **Culture in Language and WE<sub>s</sub>**

Although communicative language teaching strives to actively engage learners in meaning negotiation and emphasizes English as an intercultural and international language, mastering the cultures of all English speakers is impractical (Savignon, 2001). In his discussion of English language teaching, he notes a shift from teaching cultures to fostering cultural awareness and conceptualization among researchers. She advocates for developing socio-cultural competence in English language learners, enabling them to appreciate cultural diversity instead of judging cultural behaviors.

Increased globalization and English’s expanding international use have spurred ongoing changes in the language (McKay, 2016). Across different sociocultural contexts, English has seen structural changes at multiple levels. Many language varieties are included under the umbrella term World Englishes.

Major structural changes in English include phonological, lexical, functional, orthographic (Mahboob & Lin, 2018), and cultural (Sharifian, 2015) variations. According to Mahboob and Lin (2018, p. 260), grasping these variations helps us understand how language use differs across contexts. Jenkins (2003) highlights that aiming for a native English accent is unnecessary for most learners interacting with other non-native speakers in a globalized context. Her teaching method encourages speakers of diverse English varieties to express themselves authentically while aiming for mutual intelligibility. According to Smith (2014), intelligible international communication requires mutual accommodation of pronunciation variations; native English speakers should not expect only non-native speakers to adapt.

While lexical differences across contexts may hinder user comprehension, a significant number of users view these as creative linguistic choices (McKay, 2016). Furthermore, the relationship between language, culture, and creative language use within acculturation is demonstrable (Xu & Dinh, 2013).

Examining lexical variation through a cultural, linguistic lens, Sharifian (2011, p. 29) notes that lexically equivalent terms across languages might represent different experiential conceptualizations for speakers. Xu and Dinh’s (2013) study of lexical variations among EFL



users and speakers of different Englishes revealed that, while denotative and categorical meanings were shared, interpretations varied significantly because of individual and cultural cognitive conceptualizations. Lexical gaps between English varieties arise from missing cultural referents in some vocabulary (Sadeghpour & Sharifian, 2017).

Williams and Burden (1997) highlight the significance of studying how speakers of World Englishes understand words, particularly in classrooms with varied linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Learners and teachers alike must understand the diverse vocabulary, gaps, and interpretations possible in international technical communication, where ESP is essential for accuracy. Language learners and teachers must also be aware of how cultural differences affect word meanings and communication in various languages (Xu & Dinh, 2013).

### Effects of Teachers' Attitudes

Teachers' beliefs and attitudes are key factors in shaping their teaching practices (Zhunussova, 2021). He stated that teachers' beliefs, attitudes, and teaching methods significantly influence the classroom environment, learning process, and students' overall academic and psychological development. According to Zheng (2009), teachers' beliefs are key to understanding their thoughts, teaching approaches, and professional development. Teacher beliefs are key topics in teacher training programs designed to foster teachers' philosophies and ideals. Li and Ni (2012) showed that beliefs are central to language teaching. They aid individuals in comprehending the world, influencing how they process new data and whether it has accepted or dismissed. A teacher's beliefs, more so than their knowledge, significantly influence lesson planning, decision-making, and classroom practices. A teacher's beliefs shape how they treat their students. Teachers can better adapt their teaching methods if they understand their students' abilities (Li & Ni, 2012). Kuzborska (2011) found that teachers' classroom decisions are based on their beliefs about language teaching and learning. Richards and Rodgers (2001) argued that teachers beliefs about language learning influence their approach to teaching.

Teacher cognition, as described by Borg (2015), involves the invisible mental aspects of teaching, including teachers' knowledge, beliefs, and thoughts. English language teaching's beginnings in teacher education trace back to the 1970s. Research on teacher beliefs and attitudes has been a focal point in numerous studies for over forty years. Research into teacher attitudes assumes a reciprocal relationship between teachers' attitudes, beliefs, and classroom practices (Farrell & Bennis, 2013). Research in language pedagogy reveals the complexity of teacher attitudes and beliefs, which significantly influence their teaching methods. Also, beliefs and cognitions affect their decisions about those practices (Borg & Al-Busaidi, 2012). Feelings encompass positive, negative, and neutral states. They may promote or impede the learning process.

Teachers' views and preparation are crucial when reforming education in any area. Despite extensive ESP instruction in Iranian universities, concerns remain about speaking English proficiently and effectively among graduates in professional and research settings. Conversely, the paper examines the unique qualities of WEs and suggests its integration into university ESP courses. This study contrasts the views of two groups of Iranian language professors on the role of WEs in technical, medical, and paramedical universities, specifically addressing whether it improves students' post-graduation conversational English. Therefore, the following research questions were addressed in the current study:

- What are the attitudes of Iranian EFL and ESP teachers toward teaching World Englishes in ESP courses? Does a significant difference exist between TEFL and ESP teachers' attitudes on using WEs in ESP classes to enhance speaking skills?
- Which group is most inclined to support entering ESP courses by WEs?
- Which group would be more interested in helping ESP students improve their speaking?



## Method

### Research Design

The increasing relevance of WEs to TEFL can be attributed to their focus on oral communication. The primary aim of ESP, ultimately, is to enable learners to communicate adeptly in their professional spheres. The need for English communication among experts from diverse cultural backgrounds, who may have limited English proficiency, underscores the importance of tailoring ELT programs for ESP. In the diverse scientific environments of universities, English is essential for communication, and the WEs' knowledge as an international and local/Glocal can be effective. Regarding introducing WEs in ESP courses based on a cross-sectional design, attitudes of two groups of Iranian TEFL and ESP teachers were collected by questionnaires and data were compared statistically by t-test analysis.

### Participants

This study included 32 English teachers (16 male, 16 female) from Iran, aged 30–67, who taught at universities and language institutes; 17 were TEFL teachers and 15 were ESP teachers. The 32 randomly selected teachers and professors were Persian and Turk, all graduates of Iranian universities (small, medium, and well-known Guilanian universities). Table 1 summarizes the participants' demographic information. The data displays participant counts and the corresponding percentages, calculated from 32 participants. This table shows that, regarding learning English in a native environment, only 1 participant (3%) held a US PhD, while the vast majority (96.9%, or 31 participants) lacked native instruction.

**Table 1**

*Demography of participants*

	Scale	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>	Male	16	50
	Female	16	50
<b>Age</b>	30-40	7	22
	41-50	14	44
	50-000	11	34
<b>Teaching Experience</b>	0-4	2	6
	4-6	9	28
	6-8	13	41
	< 8	7	22
	Learnt it abroad	1	3
<b>Degree</b>	MA	8	25
	PhD candidate	10	31
	PhD	13	41
	PHD Abroad	1	3
<b>Major of Study</b>	TEFL	18	56
	English Translator	4	12
	Teaching ESP	7	22
	Teaching English /linguistics	3	9
<b>Teaching Context</b>	Institution	2	6
	University	30	94
<b>Mother Tongue</b>	Farsi	29	91
	Turkish	3	9
<b>Total</b>		32	100



## Instruments

The instrument was a questionnaire, adapted and collected from two other questionnaires, World Englishes conceptualization in Iranian ESP students by Efaf Soltani and Khodareza, 2022, and World English and World Englishes: perspectives from English language learners in Iran, Seyyed Hatam Tamimi Sa'd, 2018. It has 46 Likert scale items and three sections. Section A includes items 1 to 21, discussing participants' attitudes toward introducing WEs in their teaching materials. Section B discussed the notion of culture in ESP, TEFL, and WEs teaching, items 22 to 29. Section C items 30 to 46 discussed about SE, WEs and ownership concepts of TEFL and ESP teachers.

## Data Collection Procedures

This study uses a descriptive approach, incorporating quantitative data from questionnaires. Email, WhatsApp, and Telegram were used to collect data from participants. Each participant group received the questionnaire, a process that spanned two weeks—one week per group. The researcher then managed the questionnaire data. Quantitative analysis of the data, using independent-samples t-tests and percentages, was performed with SPSS (version 24). The discussion focused on the statistical differences in attitudes between TEFL and ESP teachers.

## Limitation

This study omitted specifics on ESP speaking challenges in academic and professional settings, and lacked details on worldwide and Iranian WEs teaching practices. Learners' gender and roles were also not considered as potentially influential factors in shaping their attitudes. Second, participant assignment to advanced groups relied on the English proficiency standards of their respective institutions. Convenient sampling also presents a limitation. Careful research necessitates a random participant sample (Mackey & Gass, 2005).

## Results

The primary objective of the present study was to examine the current attitudes of Iranian English teachers toward teaching World Englishes in ESP courses in order to improve ESP students speaking English in their universities or work domain. Speaking English in itself has some attached debates that are close to it, like cultural notions, Standard English. Finding the difference in the attitudes of two groups of participants regarding the three mentioned topics and to know their attitudes about the introducing of WEs in ESP lessons in order to improve the speaking English of their students. It begins with three general concepts in bringing world Englishes concepts in ESP classes:

- a. Relevance of WEs to TEFL and ESP/Iranian teachers' WEs conceptualization
- b. Notion of Culture
- c. Standard English /WEs /Ownership of English Language

### General Attitudes about Relevance of WEs to EFL and ESP

Tables 2 and 3 show the general findings regarding participant attitudes, without differentiating between EFL and ESP teachers. These tables present percentages calculated from the total participant count. Initially, Table 2 displays participant attitudes on Wes conceptualization and its EFL/ESP teaching relevance in Iran.

**Table 2**

*Participants' attitude toward relevance of WEs to their teaching English*

<b>A. Relevance of WEs to TEFL and ESP</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Undecided</b>
<b>1 Many varieties of English exist</b>	9.38	12.50	31.25	40.63	6.25



<b>in the world.</b>					
<b>2 World Englishes is the variety of English language used widely in the social contexts.</b>	21.88	18.75	18.75	21.88	21.88
<b>3 Knowing world Englishes varieties is important in understanding people from other countries.</b>	28.13	18.75	25.00	12.50	15.63
<b>4 WEs awareness has effect on my teaching.</b>	0.00	9.38	6.25	84.38	0.00
<b>5 WEs knowledge improves communication in EFL felids.</b>	21.88	25.00	18.75	28.13	6.25
<b>6 I dislike learning about World Englishes.</b>	25.00	37.50	12.50	9.38	9.38
<b>7 University English classes should be entirely conducted in related Englishes.</b>	18.75	18.75	31.25	25.00	6.25
<b>8 Iranian college students should use standard English in either spoken or written communications.</b>	18.75	15.63	34.38	18.75	12.50
<b>9 WEs is relevant to ELT to show the landscape of English and to increase teachers' awareness of diversity in the nature of English language.</b>	0.00	0.00	9.38	81.25	9.38
<b>10 University English classes should be conducted in both English and Persian.</b>	34.38	31.25	15.63	18.75	0.00
<b>11 Integration of WEs into teaching is impractical due to time constraints, teachers' incompetency in WEs and unavailability of teaching resources that addresses WEs.</b>	0.00	6.25	78.13	15.63	0.00
<b>12 WEs is phonological, lexical, grammatical, and functional variations in English language.</b>	12.50	9.38	68.75	0.00	9.38
<b>13 WEs knowledge improves communication in ESP Felids.</b>	37.50	12.50	43.75	6.25	0.00
<b>14 University English classes should be entirely conducted in related English.</b>	18.75	25.00	28.13	18.75	9.38
<b>15 Teacher education programs are encouraged to expose teachers to Wes to develop their implicit awareness of WEs.</b>	21.88	28.13	25.00	18.75	6.25
<b>16 WEs awareness integrates linguistic and applied courses to help teachers to teach English as</b>	3.13	9.38	59.38	25.00	3.13



<b>a pluricentric language.</b>					
<b>17 To modify teachers' biased views or misconceptions about WEs, in-service teacher training programs are invited to provide opportunities for action research on how to teach English as a pluricentric language.</b>	3.13	12.50	3.13	71.88	9.38
<b>18 English language is spread to the world and adopted by its speakers.</b>	18.75	40.63	0.00	12.50	28.12
<b>19 As long as people understand me, it is not important which variety of English I speak.</b>	37.50	15.63	18.75	28.13	0.00
<b>20 Like "Singaporean English" and "Indian English," Iran should have its own variety of English: "Iranian English"</b>	18.75	25.00	25.00	25.00	6.25
<b>21 WEs awareness is helpful in Learning /teaching English.</b>	6.25	9.38	46.88	28.13	9.38

Among the 10 items selected from 21 in Table 2, the 5 most agreed-upon were Items 4 (84.3%), 9 (81.2%), 11 (78.1%), 12 (68.7%), and item 17 (71.8%). WEs awareness will allow teachers to focus on their strengths and develop strategies to improve learners' weaknesses. Without shared language, teachers cannot effectively communicate with ESP students. Item 4 discussed the positive effects of WEs awareness on teachers' attitudes toward teaching. Participants' views on insufficient training and facilities hindering their progress toward WEs and ESP goals are presented in Item 11. The rules and functions of WEs vary based on its users, with 68.7% of participants agreeing on the variation of WEs in item 12. Participants concur that researching World Englishes involves recognizing diverse English varieties across global sociolinguistic settings. Item 17 analyzes how multicultural backgrounds and contexts of function influence the use of English in different regions, and 71.88% of participants strongly agreed.

The items with the lowest unanimous selections are Item 6 (37.5%), Item 10 (34.3%), Item 13 (43.7%), Item 18 (40.6%), and Item 19 (37.5%). The English language's evolution through speaker adaptation, coupled with the communication goal of being understood, highlights participants' dissatisfaction with current ESP teaching results. Item 21 offers a significant and revealing insight. The second objective of this study, outlined in item 21, is to investigate Iranian EFL and ESP teachers' attitudes towards WEs. It asks if the participants are aware of WEs in their teaching materials or courses. Positive agreement ("agree" or "strongly agree") was expressed by 46.8% and 28.1% of participants, respectively.

### General Notion of Culture and ESP/TEFL teachers' attitude

The following table displays findings on attitudes towards integrating culture into English teaching, a concept currently overlooked in ESP curricula. Table 3 shows that Iranian university participants most strongly agreed with items 23 (43.7%) and 28 (59.3%) regarding teaching culture in ESP or TEFL contexts. Their conversation covered cultural practices and dynamic teaching methods.



**Table 3***Culture*

<b>B. Notion of Culture</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Undecided</b>
<b>22 Language is a mechanism for channeling culture.</b>	15.63	21.88	25.00	21.88	15.63
<b>23 You prefer integrating culture in your teaching/learning practices.</b>	9.38	15.63	25.00	43.75	6.25
<b>24 The term “culture” means, when it comes to language and language use in the field of learning /teaching, that language.</b>	25.00	21.88	21.88	25.00	6.25
<b>25 Culture is an inextricable part of language Learning, especially in learning English as a global language.</b>	18.75	15.63	34.38	28.13	3.13
<b>26 There is no need to integrate culture in ESP language learning.</b>	18.75	25.00	21.88	18.75	15.63
<b>27 An intercultural approach for incorporating culture into learning English in TEFL/ESP in universities is essential.</b>	9.38	31.25	15.63	21.88	21.88
<b>28 You have dynamic approaches for teaching culture in your teaching English as a TEFL/ ESP teacher.</b>	6.25	6.25	28.13	59.38	0.00
<b>29 Socially culture is not teachable, must be practice in social context.</b>	28.13	21.88	18.75	28.13	3.13

Table 3 also shows that the least unanimously selected items are Item 26 (25.0%), and Item 27 (31.2%). They presented ESP needs of cultural practices and incorporating an intercultural approach in university English classes.

Second objective of the study was item 24 and 29 that if TEFL and ESP teachers are agreed on culture teaching but universities cannot be the only place for incorporating culture to learning.

According to Item 29, culture teaching is practical. Iranian teachers' cognizance of culture and TEL is not equal to current TEFL policy, but half of the participants agree that learning culture is possible with language learning, and the other half disagree that learning is done at university. While this question opens up, learning culture does not happen by learning ESP because speaking skills is not considered in ESP syllabus design.

### **General attitudes about SE /WEs /Ownership of the English Language**

The results of looking at English as a standard by Iranian TEFL and ESP teachers are offered in Table 4.

**Table 4***General Attitudes toward SE, WEs, and Ownership of the English language*

<b>C. Standard English /WEs/Ownership of English Language</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Undecided</b>
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<b>30 Only inner circle speaker (y. Kachru, 2008), English is their mother tongue are owner of English language.</b>	21.88	18.75	15.63	25.00	18.75
<b>31 British English and American English are the major varieties of English in the world.</b>	15.63	28.13	18.75	21.88	15.63
<b>32 The English spoken by Indian people is not authentic English.</b>	37.50	15.63	6.25	37.50	3.13
<b>33 When communication happens via speaking English, the users are owner of English language.</b>	9.38	18.75	6.25	50.00	15.63
<b>34 Language, culture, and identity are interrelated.</b>	28.13	21.88	18.75	25.00	6.25
<b>35 English is an international language.</b>	3.13	25.00	31.25	28.13	12.50
<b>36 English language and global sharing of ownership, most of us cheer it.</b>	6.25	9.38	6.25	6.25	71.88
<b>37 Ownership of English has seen a shift away from native speaker to its users in any context.</b>	3.13	46.88	46.88	3.13	0.00
<b>38 If I have a chance, I would like to travel to English-speaking countries, like the USA or the United Kingdom.</b>	28.13	18.75	31.25	21.88	0.00
<b>39 When I speak English, I want to sound like a native speaker.</b>	21.88	25.00	12.50	21.88	18.75
<b>40 When I speak English, I want to be identified clearly as Iranian.</b>	15.63	31.25	9.38	28.13	15.63
<b>41 I am not confident in speaking English because of my Persian accent.</b>	12.50	15.63	25.00	21.88	28.13
<b>42 I would not take English if it were not a compulsory subject in school.</b>	6.25	31.25	25.00	28.13	9.38
<b>43 If English were not taught at school, I would study it on my own.</b>	9.38	9.38	28.13	31.25	21.88
<b>44 No English degree should be a requirement for obtaining a university degree in Iran.</b>	25.00	21.88	28.13	18.75	6.25
<b>45 Oral language skills are more important than literacy skills in college English education.</b>	34.38	12.50	18.75	34.38	0.00
<b>46 The non-native English speakers can also speak Standard English. (Here, Standard English refers to English spoken in English-speaking countries, like the USA or the United Kingdom).</b>	21.88	28.13	18.75	15.63	15.63

Regarding the participants' purposes for teaching English, they are looking to Standard English and recent debate about English ownership, the following items of the questionnaire have been chosen most unanimously: Item 33 (50.0%), and Item 36 (71.8%). It approved Widdowson (2012) opinion about ownership of English language by its settlers and native speakers.





The least agreed-upon items are as follows: Item 42(31.2%) and Item 45 (34.3%). Practicing the English language and literacy in English is important for EFL and ESP teachers. Item 32 (37.5%), about the authenticity of Indian English, seems that 50 percent of participants accept it strongly and 50 percent reject it, and Item 37(59.3%) shows that participants are equally divided between agreeing and disagreeing with the shift of ownership concepts of English. It might seem ironic that while the demographic information of the participants shows that 91. % of the participants practiced English in Iran; therefore, teaching culture is expected to be an important task for them, because communication via speaking is important for them. (Item 34).

### Comparing ESP and TEFL Teachers' Attitudes toward WEs

In contrast to the preceding section, this section presents a comparison of ESP and TEFL participants' attitudes toward teaching WEs in university settings. Table 5 presents the independent-samples t-test results for participants' attitudes toward WEs. A significant difference in attitudes between the two groups of English teachers is shown in Table 5 for specific questionnaire items.

**Table 5**

*Teachers' Attitudes Toward WEs, t-test for Equality of Means*

t	Item	Df	sig. (2- tailed)	Mean difference
1	-.997	30	.327	-.478
2	-.712	30	.482	-.376
3	-1.442	30	.160	-.722
4	-.448	30	.657	-.145
5	.643	30	.210	1.282
6	-1.553	30	.131	-.682
7	.174	30	.863	.094
8	-2.042	30	.050	-1.035
9	.431	30	.670	.098
10	-1.633	30	.113	-.882
11	-2.029	30	.051	-.443
1	-2.936	30	.006	-1.318
14	-1.641	30	.111	-.820
15	-2.108	30	.043	-1.055
16	-1.062	30	.297	-.369
17	-1.374	30	.180	-.600
18	-1.843	30	.075	-.749
19	-2.233	30	.033	-1.298
20	-1.204	30	.238	-.643
21	-1.370	30	.181	-.545

t item 13 (30) = -2.93; p=.006 (WEs knowledge improves communication in ESP fields).

t item 15 (30) = -2.10; p=.043 (lack of exposure to WEs awareness by teacher education program).

t item 19 (30) = -2.23; p= .033(variety of English is important in English speaking).

### Comparing ESP and TEFL Teachers' attitudes toward notion of culture

The participants' attitudes on teaching culture in ESP course are compared in Table 6.

**Table 6***T-test for Equality of Mean*

t	item	Df	sig. (2- tailed)	Mean difference
22	-1.171	30	.251	-.584
23	-1.346	30	.188	-.663
24	-1.856	30	.073	-1.004
25	-1.518	30	.139	-.800
26	-1.379	30	.178	-.686
27	-.957	30	.346	-.451
28	-1.474	30	.151	-.600
29	-2.324	30	.027	-1.035

t item 29 (30) = -3.32; p=.027

According to Item 29, the two groups of teachers differ significantly in their attitudes toward the "socially culture is not teachable, must be practiced in social context".

### Comparing ESP and TEFL Teachers' attitudes toward SE, WEs and ownership of English

Table 7 presents the results of the comparison of the participants' attitudes toward the SE, WEs, and ownership of English attitudes, which presents significant differences among TEFL and ESP teachers' attitudes.

**Table 7***T-test for Equality of Means*

Item	t	Df	sig. (2- tailed)	Mean difference
30	-.586	30	.562	-.318
31	-1.131	30	.267	-.569
32	-2.139	30	.041	1.306
33	-.396	30	.695	-.212
34	-2.464	30	.020	1.306
35	-1.016	30	.318	-.447
36	.225	30	.823	.067
37	-2.835	30	.008	-1.004
38	-2.090	30	.045	-1.129
39	-1.178	30	.248	-.612
40	-1.330	30	.194	-.694
41	-1.011	30	.320	-.475
42	-2.329	30	.027	1.051
43	-.441	30	.663	-.204
44	-1.926	30	.064	-.996
45	-2.363	30	.025	1.388
46	-1.621	30	.115	-.788

t item 32 (30) = -2.13; p=.041

t item 34 (30) = -2.46; p=.020

t item 37 (30) = -2.83; p=.008

t item 38 (30) = -2.09; p=.045

t item 42 (30) = -2.32; p=.027

t item 45(30) = -2.36; p=.025

The aforementioned points address topics including authentic English (Item 32), the interplay of language, culture, and identity (Item 34), evolving English ownership perceptions (Item 37), and literacy/oral language proficiency (Item 45) within Iran. Table 7 shows substantial



discrepancies between the groups regarding native-like English speaking (Item 38) and English as a second language interest (Item 42).

To better understand teacher group preferences, Table 8 presents their most common responses to significantly different questionnaire items. It's important to note that these questions target common beliefs within Iran's educational policy. The average scores in Table 8 show that the EFL group (47.4%) outperformed the ESP group (46%).

Beyond the response percentages, the kinds of answers varied across some questions. For example, with items 15, 29, 34, 37, 38, and 42, the groups' opinions were always opposite.

**Table 8**  
*TEFL and ESP Teacher Groups*

		Teachers Groups			
subject	Items	TEFL		ESP	
		Response	Percent	Response	Percent
	13	Agree	66.7	strongly agree	58.8
<b>Attitudes toward WEs</b>	15	strongly agree	36.4	disagree	38
	19	strongly agree	40	strongly agree	52.9
<b>Culture and WEs</b>	29	strongly agree	40	disagree	70.5
	32	strongly agree	53.3	strongly disagree	52.9
	34	strongly agree	40	strongly disagree	35.2
	37	Agree	66.7	disagree	64.7
	38	Agree	42.9	strongly disagree	35.2
<b>SE, WEs, Ownership</b>	42	strongly agree	46.7	disagree	41.1
	45	Agree	41.7	strongly disagree	47

This significant finding suggests a substantial difference in how the two groups perceive the items mentioned. Perhaps TEFL participants' perspectives on World Englishes have been shaped by their English exposure, specifically concerning English as a global language (Item 15), the necessary educational policies (Item 32), and learning objectives (Item 45).

### Discussion

Free language, naturally, does not imply unintelligible conversations; rather, it signifies language simplified and specialized to meet user demands (Mahboob & Lin, 2018). This study investigated Iranian EFL and ESP teachers' attitudes toward WEs and SE in English teaching curricula. And comparing these two groups' attitudes on teaching WEs in ESP courses.

Notably, questionnaire items most unanimously chosen by participants directly relate to the status of "professional" World Englishes. The first part of the questionnaire, focusing on participants' views of World Englishes and its role in ESP/EFL classes, revealed widespread agreement on several key points.

Item 1: many varieties of English exist in the world.

Item 3: Knowing world Englishes varieties is important in understanding people from other countries.

Item 7: University English classes should be entirely conducted in related English. Unlike a recent study showing negative student views of World Englishes and a preference for Standard English, this synopsis reveals participants view World Englishes as a legitimate professional language.



Their preference in daily professional communication is their non-native English varieties, although they are interested in Standard English. The questionnaire's most popular initial questions also show a strong interest in learning World Englishes.

Item 15: Teacher education programs are encouraged to expose teachers to WEs to develop their implicit awareness of WEs.

Item 16: WEs awareness integrates linguistic and applied courses to help teachers to teach English as a pluricentric language

Item 17: To change teachers' biased views or misconceptions about WEs, in-service teacher training programs are invited to provide opportunities for action research on how to teach English as a pluricentric language.

Despite Items 41 and 43 being contradictory, both EFL and ESP participants highly agreed with them, showing no significant difference in perception. 73.7% of participants recognized the importance of standard and legitimate English in their responses to the questionnaire's final question. This suggests that learning Standard English was emphasized when the current teachers were students.

English's global standing has risen considerably over the past two to three decades, as noted by Marefat & Heidari (2018). Studies have also shown similar findings; learners prefer SE, but their needs also involve WEs teaching. According to Madrid and Cañado (2004), student preference for native teachers grew with their language proficiency, and teachers held more positive views of native speakers. Madrid and Cañado warned that such perceptions could harm language teaching and learning.

Furthermore, EFL teachers demonstrate a superior grasp of and greater sensitivity towards students' native cultures, backgrounds, and values (Purba, 2011). In short, favoring a single international language, like English, undeniably pushes us toward a world with a single language and culture.

That kind of world lacks the multilingual and multicultural diversity found elsewhere; uniformity, not variety, is the standard there. From a linguistic perspective, this isn't democratic (Crystal, 2003). The question of English's potential threat to other languages remains a contentious topic (House, 2003).

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