

# Elf in Twoeducational Contexts: a Cross-cultural Comparison between Croatia and Finland

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UNIVERSITY OF RIJEKA  
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**ELF in two educational contexts: A cross-cultural comparison between  
Croatia and Finland**

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the M.A. in English Language and  
Literature and Pedagogy at the University of Rijeka

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## **Abstract**

The tide of English language teaching is slowly turning in favor of English used in the global context. As the number of people who use English as a foreign language outnumbers the number of native English speakers, non-native speakers have realized that their voice needs to be heard and it should no longer be ignored. One's linguistic competence should not be measured by native-like standards, and English as a lingua franca serves as a tool to redefine this traditional notion. The focus of English language teaching should primarily be communication and getting the message across. If two people are able to successfully hold a conversation using English, i.e. if their message is understood by their interlocutor, they are considered competent users of English as a lingua franca. English language teaching in school needs to become communication-oriented, and it needs to equip students with communication skills which will enable them to confidently use English on a global level.

The present study involved 174 students; 96 students from a Finnish upper-secondary school and 78 students from a Croatian grammar school. The findings show that Croatian students feel more open towards the idea of English as a lingua franca becoming a part of their English language teaching, and they also express the need to know more about different English language varieties. Finnish students feel that English language teaching in their school should remain unaltered, and the idea of English as a lingua franca is not as appealing to them as much as it is to Croatians. Both groups hold that classes need to be more communication-oriented. However, native-speaker model is still prevalent as they judge their competencies according to it. It is the teachers' responsibility to familiarize students with different English language varieties and the notion of English as a lingua franca.

*Keywords:* ELF, EFL, ELT, English teachers, native speakers, non-native speakers

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## 1. Demystifying ELF

As society keeps moving forward, it constantly undergoes new sets of changes which shape its future functioning in all of its domains. Education is no exception. If people are expected to achieve their personal potential and contribute to society with their knowledge, governing bodies must continuously rethink education policies. When it comes to teaching English as a foreign language, the technique has always been the same; native-like models are the primary source used for teaching and instruction. For decades, no one actually questioned the methods which were all modeled upon the native and “proper” Standard English (SE). English as a lingua franca (ELF) arose as a voice of the non-native speakers who wanted their voice to be heard and to have a say when it came to making decisions regarding language policies and English language teaching (ELT). But let us start by explaining why ELF actually became a valid notion in the world of linguistics.

Prior to the 1980s, scholars differentiated between two categories: native and non-native speakers. This kind of distinction resulted in the creation of notions such as English as a Native Language (ENL), English as a Second Language (ESL), English as a Foreign Language (EFL), and English as an International Language (EIL) (Bolton, 2013). Thanks to the work of Halliday, McIntosh and Strevens in the mid-sixties, the concept of English language was transformed: “English is no longer the possession of the British, or even the British and the Americans, but an international language which increasing numbers of people adopt for at least some of their purposes (...) in an increasingly large number of different varieties (Halliday, McIntosh and Strevens, 1964: 293). Smith (1976: 39) suggests a more appropriate term: “English as an International Auxiliary language”, since he believes this term more accurately reflects the usage of English on a global level. Smith, Kachru and many others contributed greatly to the rise of the concept called “world Englishes”, “English varieties”, “International Englishes” and “new Englishes”.

Kachru's model of concentric circles for grouping English varieties still stands as the most influential model, even though, in today's context it is over-simplified, which was identified by Kachru himself, Yoneoka, Rajadurai, Graddol and many others. Kachru's model is based on the classic differentiation between ENL, ESL and EFL. The first circle, called the Inner Circle, comprises native speakers of English, who are norm-providing, while the second one, the Outer Circle, consists of speakers of English as a second language, who are norm-developing. In the last circle, called the Expanding Circle, there are people learning English as a foreign language, who are norm-dependent. Graddol (1997) is among the ones who criticize Kachru's model saying it puts native speakers and native-speaking countries at the center of global use, making them the best source of correctness, models for teaching and services used by those in the Expanding Circle. He also predicts that this model will not be useful in the 21<sup>st</sup> century as the number of people who speak English as an additional language will outnumber native speakers of English and therefore have the power to decide the future of English on a global level.

Since non-native speakers outnumber native speakers, many scholars wonder whether the Inner Circle should be norm-providing and whether that position can be justified on a global scale. If the Expanding Circle is a norm-dependent construct, non-native speakers are not able to shape English according to their needs, i.e. they depend on the norms and rules prescribed by the native-speaker model. Here is where ELF comes into the picture. ELF users are able to appropriate the language and are not dependent on native-speaker forms. They are able to adjust the language and develop norms of their own (Hülmbauer, Böhringer, and Seidlhofer, 2008). It is very important to differentiate between ELF and EFL. The main goal of ELF is intercultural communication, which is defined as "communication between and among those from different cultures" (Kurylo, 2013: 5), meaning ELF primarily functions as a language across different first languages (L1) (Bürki, 2013). On the other hand, EFL is

learned at school and strives to incorporate native-speaker models and it often involves learning about native-speaker cultures. It should not come as a surprise that people use both on a daily basis; ELF or EFL, depending on the context (Hülmbauer, Böhringer, and Seidlhofer, 2008).

As Gnutzmann (2000) puts it, when using ELF, the language is no longer based on linguistic and sociocultural norms of native-speaker countries. Widdowson (1994) is even more critical and says that native speakers have no right to intervene or pass judgment. He claims that because of the fact that English is an international language, no one can claim custody over it.

It should not be concluded that native speakers cannot use ELF. Any speaker who uses English as a tool for intercultural communication (with a speaker of a different first language) is an ELF user. When it comes to ELF, the emphasis is not on formal correctness, but on functional effectiveness. It is not about the learning which happens incidentally; it is all about using the language (Hülmbauer, Böhringer, and Seidlhofer, 2008). Jenkins, one of the most prominent researchers in the field of ELF, points out that “ELF is like a bastard offspring of English and non-native Englishes, of equal dignity with the native, legitimate, language” (2007: 16) referring to Mufwene’s discussion (1997) of “legitimate and illegitimate offspring of English” in support of creole languages. When looking at the name itself, “lingua franca” stands for the language of the Franks, and the expression “frank and free” is used by the common law to refer to someone who is not a slave, but a free individual. The expression “francus” was also identical with the ethnic name Francus which acquired the sense of freedom (Kayman, 2009). ELF, the language of the free, is politely “knocking” on the door of English teaching policies and is wondering: Could I be implemented into ELT anytime soon?



## **2. ELF in a 21<sup>st</sup>-century classroom**

### **2.1. Is ELF a sustainable solution?**

The spread of English has an ambivalent role: it is a lingua franca needed to accommodate intercultural communication and it is a vehicle for the spread of a culture influenced by the USA and, to a lesser extent, Western Europe (Mansfield and Poppy, 2012). If language is considered an important commodity in the globalized world, then it has to be acknowledged that the process of globalization influences the way English is learned and taught. The function of English as an international tool for communication needs to be remodeled and changed for its use in an EFL classroom. Hence, teachers need to equip their students with language skills which will help them understand different accents, but also to be understood by others. This would also raise awareness of the existence of non-native speakers' use of different English varieties as a means of communication (Mansfield and Poppy, 2012). Teachers are required to respond pragmatically and shift the focus from native models which dominate ELT.

When it comes to defying native-speaker norms, ELF serves as a good example. Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English (VOICE) drew some attention by pointing out some lexicogrammatical features of ELF which do not appear to obstruct communication and understanding of the message, but would probably be urgently corrected by most English teachers. These include: dropping the third person present tense *-s*, interchanging between *who* and *which*, shift in the use of articles, invariant use of question tags, inserting redundant prepositions, overusing verbs of high semantic generality, overdoing explicitness and replacing infinitive constructions with *that*-clauses (Seidlhofer, 2004).

Interestingly, even in colonial times, there was never a construct of perfect English imposed on learners (Knapp, 1987). Today, all non-native varieties rely on the native-speaker

standard. In many former British colonies where English is used as a second language, the variety used by the locals is a mixture of local mother tongues, the norms of SE and the sociolinguistic norms. This mixture contributes to the creation of distinct geographical varieties which then become the target language for the local people. Indian English is a typical example here; it occurs in many different varieties, such as Punjabi English, Bengali English, and even as “educated Indian English”. This is a proof that non-native varieties consist of sociocultural identities of its speakers and English is like a chameleon, adapting to its surroundings and taking into consideration the cultural background of the local people (Knapp, 1987).

Bearing that in mind, teaching English today is definitely nothing like a linguistic chameleon. In Germany, English is taught as a single color, as Standard British English, with some variations from American English. The importance of English as a world language is acknowledged in the curricula, but it is still viewed as a unitary notion not prone to global influences. Although Solmecke (1979) and Schröder and Macht (1983) found that most university students of English language and literature and future English teachers thought of English as an international lingua franca and therefore did not want to belong to a certain English-speaking community, there is a widespread belief that by learning SE, an individual is prepared to use EIL (cf. Knapp, 1987).

ELF researchers are constantly calling on English teachers to incorporate new dimensions of variability in ELT, as emphasized in ELF research (Seidlhofer, 2011). There is a large corpus of written and spoken text samples which go in favor of the plea, but the sociocultural and communicative challenges pose an unfamiliar territory for English language teachers (Lo Bianco, 2014). Lo Bianco asks a crucial question regarding this matter: “To what extent are teachers, or more broadly, educators “sovereign” or sufficiently autonomous that they can independently heed this call?” (Lo Bianco, 2014: 206). The educational environment

in which ELF could possibly find its place needs to be inspected and analyzed. A language ecology-focused language policy and planning would include educators, experts, policy makers, environment, economy and society, which presents a challenging task for ELF proponents. Jenkins's argument (2009) that there are various gatekeepers who inhibit responsiveness of institutions to ELF is a very significant one when it comes to discussing the role of the academic community. If the members of the academic community comply with the gatekeepers' presumptions against acceptable forms of English, such as ELF, it needs to be discussed who the gatekeepers, i.e. the people responsible for creating these expectations, are (Lo Bianco, 2014).

Language teachers have started questioning whether they are ready to deal with all the ELF challenges in their classroom. In a similar study, Connelly (2008) explained how difficult it was for her to deal with all the different subjectivities she had to deal with in her class full of children from various indigenous communities (cf. Alsagoff, McKay, Hu, and Renandya, 2012). One of the biggest challenges when incorporating ELF in a classroom is the need for stepping out of one's comfort zone. Most teachers rely heavily on books and when it comes to ELF, one's cultural background, as well as the acceptance of other cultural identities, plays a big role in what the ELT process entails.

## **2.2. Global attitudes towards ELF**

ELF is considered a pretty controversial notion, especially from a native-speaker point of view. Most non-natives believe ELF is beneficial to their everyday use of English, while the majority of natives think of ELF as a lesser and improper version of SE. However, as ELF is mostly used by non-native speakers, it is valuable to explore what the reason is behind some non-natives' belief that ELF is deficient and falls short of native-like standards.

While the value of ELF is undisputed (Graddol, 1997; Seidlhofer, 2004), the practice of gatekeeping (proposed by Jenkins and mentioned in the previous chapter) creates a feeling of unease and a lack of trust when it comes to non-natives and their use of ELF. Non-natives are torn between their L1 identity and idealistic native-like English models (Albl-Mikasa, 2009). Albl-Mikasa (2009) makes a great point by differentiating between non-native English teachers and non-native speakers of English. Jenkins (2007) points out in her research, carried out among non-native English teachers, that if one wants to be a competent English teacher, they need to be proficient or successful when using English. On the other hand, Albl-Mikasa claims that proficiency levels are not in question when we talk about regular non-native English speakers since their language skills vary greatly. There are non-native ELF users who are unlikely to be called proficient English speakers, and yet they cannot be denied the status of an ELF user (Albl-Mikasa, 2009).

Albl-Mikasa's study included non-native and native speakers of English, and revealed that all of the non-native speakers involved in the study considered ELF useful and handy, although 53% of them were also able to associate disadvantages with using ELF. Native speakers were somewhat less enthusiastic about ELF; 62% could think of an advantage, while 8% could not think of a single advantage. Seventy-seven percent of them were able to come up with various disadvantages. Worthy of mentioning is the fact that non-native speakers would rather use English with natives as they believed it helped them improve their English skills (65%). Albl-Mikasa's results are in line with Kohn's psycholinguistic illustration that there really is not a definable native-speaker model (cf. Kohn, 2009). People have a vague mental model in their head which they use to create assumptions about the ideal English speaker (Albl-Mikasa, 2009).

In research conducted by Drljača Margić and Širola (2009) among MA and BA students of English Language and Literature, MA students seemed to be more open to non-

native varieties of English, while 62,5% of BA students were familiar only with native English varieties, or they thought of English, American, Canadian as the only proper English varieties. Both groups emphasized the fact that their English was different when talking to a native speaker. They were more careful with grammar, pronunciation and the choice of words, which shows signs of linguistic accommodation. MA students were generally more open to the idea of EIL becoming a separate variety, and 20% of them (as opposed to 0% of BA students) stated that Indian English could be as important a model for International English as British or American English (Drljača Margić and Širola, 2009).

Who is the ideal model for teaching English: a native speaker or a non-native ELF user? If students are asked they will go for the native speaker (Kuo, 2006). On the opposite side, teachers are opting for a different model (Timmis, 2002). A couple of decades ago, the situation was transparent and clear. Kachru's model took the center stage when it came to the conceptualization of English varieties and no one dared to question the native-speaker model as the norm-providing one. Today, the situation is different and the attitude towards the ideal teaching models is changing. Many people are starting to reject native speakers as the ideal model, not because it contradicts with Phillipson's "linguistic imperialism" or Holliday's "native speakerism", but because of more pragmatic reasons; teachers need to provide their learners with a useful tool for international communication (Ur, 2010).

Several different reasons can be advanced for positive attitudes towards ELF: native speakers have become a minority and the emphasis has been put on the Outer and the Expanding Circles consisting of non-native speakers. Secondly, most English teachers in non-English speaking countries are non-natives themselves and are the only linguistic role-model students have. In addition, students are going to use English primarily as a lingua franca. Also, nobody mentions the fact that learners are all condemned to failure if native-like models persist in education because no person can suddenly become a native speaker (Cook, 1999).

However, the most important reason is the fact that there are so many ELF users who have become fluent in English, their language skills are well-developed and are certainly a valid model for ELT (Ur, 2010).

Ur (2010) makes a significant point in describing a model for ELT. She points out that an ideal English language teacher should be a fully competent ELF user, regardless of the fact whether he or she is a native-speaker or not. It is not about the “native-speakerness”, but about proficiency. If one is fully competent in using English and can serve as a valuable role model, should it matter where he or she comes from? It is completely irrelevant (Ur, 2010).

Still, the native speaker is the norm. One of the conditions that can usually be found when an ESL job is advertised is that the person needs to be a native speaker. This condition discriminates against every competent, fluent and skillful ELF user and still, not a lot of people are actually surprised or even concerned that this is the case with most ELT positions. Mahboob’s (2003) study of 122 Intensive English Programs (IEP) in the USA revealed that only 7,9% of ESL teachers were in fact non-native English teachers. More worrying is the fact that 59,8% program administrators listed “native speaker” as a major factor when hiring teachers. On the other hand, around 40% of U.S. TESOL teacher trainees were non-native English speakers (NNES) and they usually paid a lot more money than native English speakers (NES) to be trained as ESL teachers (Llurda, 2005). The study by Kelch and Santana-Williamson (2002) suggested ESL/EFL students were not always able to identify and differentiate between non-native and native English speakers; 56 ESL students correctly identified tape-recorded natives and non-natives only 45% of the time (cf. Moussu, 2010).

Accent is another major factor when it comes to language preferences. Fang’s study (2016) at a university in southeast China called for a possible shift in attitudes towards different accents and ELF in general. Previous researches within the Chinese context

suggested strong preference for native-like accents and called for an abandonment of Chinese English accents (cf. Huang, 2010). Fang's research included 55 international staff members who belong to the Inner, Outer, but also to the Expanding Circle. Since most of the local Chinese teachers earned their degree abroad, the students are exposed to a large number of different English varieties. Interestingly, 52,4% of the respondents claimed that there was no better accent or either had no idea, while 47,6% claimed that there was a preference for certain varieties (mostly UK and US). However, native-like models were still preferable within the community. Most respondents claimed that British English sounded formal and authentic, while American English seemed popular in their minds. UK and US accents were also easier to understand, and ranked as top two favorite varieties (Fang, 2016). Although Fang comes up with some interesting results, we cannot claim that these results reflect general attitudes toward different English accents and ELF in China. It has to be taken into consideration that his research was conducted at a university which employs mostly international teachers and Chinese teachers with degrees obtained abroad. The results might have been different if the research were conducted among teachers who had got their degree in China and had little international experience.

An interview with a native English speaker and an ESL tutor in Beijing reveals some interesting information about the position of English teachers in China. She explains that the ELT system is based on the prejudice that a white Westerner without an accent (to a lesser degree) is the best role-model when it comes to learning a foreign language, especially English. Even though China is one of the leading countries when it comes to technology, the same cannot be said for their education system. The need for English teachers is massive and it creates the stigma that only a white Westerner is suitable for the position. She claims that the accent is not the biggest factor when it comes to choosing a teacher; it is their looks and the country of their origin. She concludes that a competent white ELF user is bound to find a

job in China even if their English does not satisfy common proficiency levels. Apart from China, Vietnam is another country where an ELF user could easily get a teaching position (N.C., personal communication, May 16, 2016).

The same, however, cannot be said for Singapore and Japan. Those countries still opt for the old-fashioned native-speaker model and it is a challenging task to find a teaching position for ELF teachers. A study conducted by Galloway and Rose (2013) at a Japanese university provided some insightful facts about the ELT system in Japan. The title of the article they published is: “They envision going to New York, not Jakarta.” This title indeed depicts the position of English in Japan as the best English teacher is considered to be a native speaker. The study examined attitudes at a bilingual business degree program where sophomore students are assisted by postgraduate international students, who help them with the business courses, but also work on their conversation skills in English, i.e. their ELF abilities. Once exposed to the actual use of ELF in a real situation, students and their assistants had mostly positive attitudes towards using ELF and different English varieties. Their responses coincide with the belief that English is indeed a communication tool on a global level, which is a stark contrast to a previous study which revealed a strong tendency for NES norms (cf. Llorca, 2004). Professor Bertrum of the university explains that a male American is still the norm when ELT in Japan is discussed. As he puts it, it gives their students a false sense of security because when they start working or studying abroad, they will have to be ready to use international English, and not the one promoted in the classrooms all over Japan (Galloway and Rose, 2013).



### **2.3. Effectiveness of ELF**

When the effectiveness of ELF is discussed, one may wonder whether ELF is just a notion, or it can actually be taught in an EFL classroom. So far, the practice has been that the teacher teaches English based on EFL norms, but the students actually use English as ELF outside the classroom. Is it possible to teach English according to ELF policy in the classroom?

Research has shown, especially in the last two decades, that the use of English as a global language is growing rapidly and it shows no signs of slowing down. The use of global English is particularly strong with adolescents who seem to be the generation most affected by this phenomenon (Sernhede, 2007). Giorgis (2013) carried out a study among Italian high school students to analyze their perspectives on their use of English. 45 out of 62 students said that they felt like the English they used was not actually a foreign language, but rather a set of expressions in a contact language they used to express how they felt about their hobbies, interests, movies, etc. What is also interesting is the fact that being native Italian or non-native did not seem to influence the way students used English. They seemed to be switching from their use of L1 to ELF whenever they needed to communicate to their interlocutors who did not share their L1. Interestingly enough, they seemed to be using ELF even with students who spoke their L1, because it was also a way to be accepted by their peers (Giorgis, 2013).

In order for ELF to become an effective tool in an EFL classroom, the idea of speakers of ELF being legitimate language users in their own right needs to be embraced. Even though there is a vast corpora of L1 varieties, the same cannot be said for ELF, as there are many projects which are still in the early stages of development (Cogo and Dewey, 2006). The situation has changed in the last ten years, particularly thanks to the works of Mauranen, Hülmbauer, Seidlhofer and Jenkins, but the imbalance is still present. In order to understand how ELF works, more emphasis needs to be put on the pragmatic value of ELF, as the main

focus has been on lexicogrammatical features of the language. This, of course, does not mean that lexicogrammatical features should be completely ignored; they should serve as a base for the knowledge of pragmatics and communicative efficiency.

When ELF was first introduced, it was mostly criticized for the lack of its communicative efficiency. Many people argued that people who share a different cultural and linguistic background are bound to come across certain language barriers when engaging in a conversation. ELF researchers immediately tackled the issue and found that misunderstandings are rare (Mauranen, 2006). Even when misunderstandings do occur, they are never ignored, but tackled and resolved. The strategies used to prevent misunderstandings in ELF communication are all part of the “pro-active work” because of which ELF has proved to be a very efficient tool in facilitating intercultural communication (Mauranen, 2006, cf. Cogo, 2010).

If ELF wants to be recognized in an EFL classroom, a multi-norm approach to language teaching needs to be adopted. Cangarajah (2005) suggests a framework where traditional concepts such as “nativeness” and “authenticity” would be replaced by “expertise”, “local practices” and “relevance”. This way the pedagogy of ELF is cutting ties with the Inner Circle context and gives rise to the development of learners’ “metalinguistic awareness” (cf. Dewey and Leung, 2010).

One important question that needs to be raised when discussing the concept of ELF is whether coursebooks support the idea of ELF. Typical “global” coursebooks like Headway and Oxford English Grammar Course promote learning models based completely on native-like English (they usually include just a couple of recordings of non-native English in order to raise awareness of other varieties). There are only a few coursebooks that are more ELF-oriented, such as New English File and the Real Lives, Real Listening series. In general, even

though most learners are going to use English to communicate with other non-native English speakers, they are still faced with the native-speaker model which is largely promoted in teaching materials. Moreover, the same model is the base for assessment when it comes to so-called “international ELT examinations” (Jenkins, 2012). Matsuda (2012) agrees that EFL curricula has been based mostly on native English varieties, which present the norm when it comes to ELT. They have been here for such a long time that it seems natural for students and teachers to rely on them for learning and teaching. Naji Meidani and Pishghadam (2013) did a research on four coursebooks popular around the globe and found that multicultural aspects were fairly represented, meaning that in recent years there has been a shift from native English tendencies promoted in teaching materials. However, the presence of popular American culture is still strong (cf. Vettorel and Lopriore, 2013).

Vettorel and Lopriore (2013) also did a study to find out whether global English and ELF are being represented in Italian coursebooks. In a sample comprising several coursebooks from 2008-2013, they found that global English, different varieties and multiculturalism were represented, at least to some extent, especially in parts where intercultural communication was discussed. However, the overall coursebook and language content did not reflect the inclusion of ELF. The gap between what is announced and what is implemented is still an unexplored territory (Vettorel and Lopriore, 2013).

If the idea and the true nature of ELF want to become a valid and widely-recognized phenomenon, the fact that ELF is not one of the native English varieties has to be taken into account. If two speakers have different cultural backgrounds and English is not their L1, then they are obviously not speaking English. Instead, it might be said they are speaking Englishes, or something more “centrifugal” (Rajagopalan, 2012 in O’Regan, 2016). English as used by speakers who share a different first language entails intercultural communication, which is a sufficient, i.e. self-affirmed starting point for ELF. O’Regan (2016) makes an excellent point

by giving us an overview of ELF perceptions today. Many people think of ELF, used as a medium for communication, as something original and new. Characteristics of ELF discourse are viewed as “shockingly new things - as if the world we now live in is a totally new one. It is not” (Blommaert, 2010: 16). When one reads about ELF, they might get the impression that no one used ELF decades and centuries ago. Speakers of different L1s did not use English, so it seems they did not speak at all. The neglect of the historicity of English is a fundamental flaw in an ELF narrative which barely scratches the surface of intercultural use of English (O’Regan, 2016).

#### **2.4. Intelligibility challenges**

One of the major misconceptions about ELF is that it often causes misunderstandings among its speakers. Even though there is little evidence to support this claim, some people claim that it is indeed less intelligible than the English natives use. Jenkins (2000) investigated the features of pronunciation that caused some misunderstanding between speakers of different languages. Based on her research, the concept of Lingua Franca Core (LFC) was introduced. She claims that in order to communicate successfully as an ELF user, one must know only the features of pronunciation that fall under LFC. Today, we still need a lot more data on this matter to be able to recognize exactly which speech patterns cause misunderstandings in ELF communication. Misunderstandings in ELF do not automatically lead to breakdowns in communication; humans are used to overlooking minor misunderstandings which do not influence the successful message delivery. Even if they do, in most cases the meaning becomes clear in time (Deterding, 2012).

In second language acquisition, evidence suggests that corrective feedback by a native speaker or a more competent speaker enhances comprehensibility and reduces

misunderstandings, i.e. enhances language learning (Leeman, Mackey, and Oliver, 2003). Jenkins (2006), however, states that “mutual intelligibility” is the key criterion when it comes to communication in ELF contexts. It is up to the speakers to come to a mutual agreement, rather than to rely on native speaker corrections (cf. Hanamoto, 2014). Hanamoto’s study on interactions of Japanese participants with people who do not share their L1 revealed that modifications depend on the context and the interlocutors and secondly, some misunderstandings cannot be overcome just through some modification pattern, but through a series of different modifications and negotiations of meaning. Lastly, fixing misunderstandings is something that both participants of the conversation have to be in charge of (Hanamoto, 2014).

Teo and Wilang (2012) carried out a study among 201 students from ten universities within the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) with the goal of investigating comprehensibility among ELF users. They came up with differing comprehensibility scores toward each variety (varieties included Malaysian English, Singaporean English, Philippine English, Bruneian English and others); the most comprehensible variety among Cambodians, Thais and Vietnamese was Malaysian English, which was also Burmese’s least comprehensible variety. Despite these contrasting scores, they concluded that there was moderate comprehensibility of the Expanding Circle toward the Outer Circle speakers.

When talking about different comprehensibility factors among ELF users, it is not only pronunciation that causes misunderstandings. Lexical stress, vowel quality, pragmatics, syntactic forms, lexical variations, discourse structure, attitude toward the speakers, familiarity with the spoken variety, proficiency levels, even environmental noise all play a huge role in the matter (Teo and Wilang, 2012). Within ASEAN’s context, a closer look at a different set of factors which contributed to the comprehensibility level of the Expanding Circle nationals needs to be taken; exposure to English throughout their education, outside the

classroom, through work experience, social media and through travel and staying abroad (Teo and Wilang, 2012). Not surprisingly, all these factors influenced their comprehensibility to a varying degree, and the authors warn the reader not to overgeneralize the results and the inconsistencies they may encounter.

Teo and Wilang make a significant point when it comes to intelligibility problems and ways of tackling the problem in an ELF classroom. Many authors deal with the problem by focusing purely on the language used in a discourse between people who do not share the same L1. While that also provides insightful information, focus should remain on the cultural background of people participating in the conversation. Even though lexicogrammatical, phonological and pronunciation features of their spoken English variety are valuable for future research and implications, it would also be beneficial to focus on their linguistic background and general exposure to English varieties. Exposing learners to different social media content, movies, shows and tackling the issue in classroom by using different methods is a step in the right direction. It is a step towards making a difference.

### **3. ELF Pedagogy**

#### **3.1. The integration of ELF pedagogy**

ELT has always been based on the same teaching model, “the golden standard”, i.e. SE. It embodies the native-speaker model and it forces learners to adapt to its norm and rules, regardless of their cultural and linguistic background. It is still largely present in ELT coursebooks and it is still the norm when it comes to assessment and grading. The need for a new pedagogical approach is evident in the use of English as learners of English are faced with a completely different variety of English once they leave their classroom, a place where they have to conform to native-like competencies. However, with the progression of ELF and

the acknowledgement of different English varieties, the tide is slowly changing in favor of a completely new paradigm and a new pedagogical structure.

Jenkins (2002) claims that second language pedagogy should no longer prepare learners to achieve native-like competence and it should not involve native English as a target model. If the goal is to achieve intercultural communication, the pedagogy needs to involve a description, within the field of phonology and morphosyntax, of what features are necessary to sustain mutual comprehension (cf. Kuo, 2006). Because of the fact that EFL pedagogy is still based on ENL grounds, ELF receives a lot of criticism and is deemed as incorrect and ungrammatical. If proponents of ELF argue that ELF is a unique and independent variety, then ELF and ENL need to have separate sets of pedagogical constructs. This would enable ELF to assert its authority and authenticity, and more importantly, it would be given a respectable status of a valid English variety.

Unfortunately, this sounds a lot easier than it actually is. Seidlhofer (2004) states that the language is so closely tied to native-speaker forms that it leaves little room for ELF, while Leung and Street (2012, in Drljača Margić and Vodopija-Krstanović, 2016) argue that ELF lacks a unified code, which makes its use different in specific contexts. Most importantly, teachers have not been given guidelines on how to integrate ELF pedagogy in their classrooms and with ELT still being considered context-dependent, ELF pedagogy is still waiting for its implementation in the language system (Matsuda, 2012). As Sifakis (2004) puts it, ELF is fascinating, but it is an area yet to be thoroughly explored.

One of the key notions in language pedagogy, already mentioned a couple of times, is intercultural communicative competence (ICC), proposed by Byram in 1997. One of its main goals is to make language teachers aware of the cultural dimension their learners are bringing into the classroom. The focus in ICC is on the competencies that relate to language and

culture on a national level (Byram, 1997). Baker (2015) argues that attitudes and knowledge pertinent to ICC may be useful in lingua franca communication, but lingua franca is less likely to involve direct connections between a language and a culture. However, ELF and ICC share a common ground: their weak representation in ELT. Functionally, both employ the same principles as ELF in constantly trying to get away from native English models and raise awareness of the speaker's cultural identity and linguistic background. ICC, similarly, focuses on the cultural aspect of the communication and it directly links the linguistic competence with the cultural aspect. In ELT, teachers are still hesitant when it comes to using ELF or ICC as they feel less competent to tackle the subjects. One of the main reasons for that is the oversimplification of ICC and a static view of cultures and languages present in ELT coursebooks, which still employ the anglophone cultural model. The degree of simplification is a vital part of teaching, but the relevance of both ICC and ELF simply must not be ignored (Baker, 2015). ICC, especially in a relation to ELF, is still a "blind spot" in ELT and pedagogic researchers and scholars need to give more attention to this issue as a response to learners' needs is very much needed and demanded (Baker, 2015).

When talking about incorporating ELF pedagogy, it is not only about the learners that ELF proponents have to worry about. Non-native English teachers usually spend many years learning the language based on native standards and pursuing the unattainable native-speaker status (Llurda, 2009). A lot of non-native English teachers are still battling with the acceptance of their status as non-natives. They still look at it as a flaw, as something negative which is stopping them from becoming competent teachers. Most of them are constantly looking for signs of appreciation from native English teachers, when in fact they should be focusing on their students, who are faced with the challenges of using English outside the classroom. Admiring the native status and loathing your non-nativeness leads to a problem



with self-confidence (Llurda, 2009), which then becomes an obstacle not only for the teacher, but also for everyone influenced by their work.

In German secondary schools, for example, the situation seems to be inconsistent. British and American English varieties still represent the teaching norm, but with a new set of correction rules, non-native teachers have started putting more emphasis on communication. This has not gone unnoticed and the authorities are doing their best to accommodate students' needs for a new approach to ELT and intercultural communication. The same discrepancy is visible at German universities where teachers usually have to be native speakers, and SE is the target model. However, the change in practice is happening thanks to many mobility programs all over Europe. Many courses are being offered in English and are taught by non-native teachers, meaning their immersion into college activities is contingent on their use of ELF (Kohn, 2011). Kohn came up with the concept of "my English", which refers to our own personal English used when engaging in ELF interactions. If ELF speakers are considered language learners, then language learning is a necessary condition of ELF. He also points out that second language acquisition and ELF should go hand-in-hand which would benefit both fields and probably result in new discoveries and findings.

The situation in Croatia is still not showing promising results. In research conducted by Drljača Margić and Vodopija-Krstanović (2016), 60% of English teachers considered the ultimate goal of ELT was to achieve native-like competence, and more than 70% believed that English teachers needed to have a native-like pronunciation. Around half of them believed ELF was a separate English variety and only 38,74% felt like ELF could serve as a model for teaching. Still, only 13,46% thought it would pollute and simplify the language, and confuse both learners and teachers. Most interestingly, 74,47% considered the integration of ELF in classrooms to be a feasible solution (Drljača Margić and Vodopija-Krstanović, 2016).

Dewey (2012) asks a pivotal question in regard to changing pedagogical structures in ELT: where does most responsibility for instigating pedagogic change lie? He claims that a distinction between “training” and “development” needs to be made. If teachers want to bring ELF to a next level, they have to reconsider their current beliefs and practices. By reconsidering their current practices, teachers put more focus on the developmental part of their education, while teacher training stays hindered. Dewey’s suggestion goes hand-in-hand with Widdowson’s claim (1990 in Dewey, 2012) which states that education provides solutions for situations that cannot be solved with preconceptions about a certain phenomenon, but with a reconsideration and reformulation of ideas.

### **3.2. General implications for ELF use in classrooms**

In ELT, it is extremely hard to defy the norms and rules set up by governing bodies, and sometimes one might feel like all the efforts towards making a change are in vain. But, as the number of authors coming up with different implications grows, so does the need for their recognition. ELF implications are specific in the sense that they are context and culturally dependent, meaning there are different implications for different countries. Still, there are general implications that should serve as a guideline in ELT systems all over the world.

Firstly, the way ELT functions in countries where English is not the L1 needs to be changed. The native model may be a good solution for ESL learners in the USA, but in countries where speakers are primarily going to use English to communicate with other non-native speakers, it is not compatible with the learners’ needs. The key is exposure to different English varieties and successful ELF teachers which would enable language learners to use English with other speakers who use a variety different from the “prescribed” SE (Matsumoto, 2011). Ever since different English varieties were recognized as a worthy

opposition to SE, many researchers in the field of ELF started raising awareness of a pluricentric approach to English. Many of them, such as Cogo, Dewey, Seidlhofer and Jenkins, went one step further and started emphasizing the idea of empirical descriptions of ELF, so that a new ELT approach would include English in local contexts (Matsumoto, 2011). After exposing students to different English varieties, Matsumoto proposes that teachers should work on developing students' phonological accommodation skills by encouraging interactions between them. It would also be beneficial if teachers could set up discussions on differences between native speaker – non-native speaker interaction and ELF interaction, and also, a discussion of different accents of ELF speakers (Matsumoto, 2011).

Nicos Sifakis's contribution to ELF and specifically to the development of the notion of ELF in the Greek context is immense. His implications for teacher education practices in Greece are not only useful for the Greek context; instead, they seem to be a useful novelty for every system of in-service teacher education practices. Teachers need to be aware of the global English phenomenon and the potential to use English as a non-threatening tool with a valuable multicultural background free of native-speaker constraints. Also, they need to shift their attention from culturally-specific knowledge to culture-general awareness; i.e. move from target culture ideals to multicultural awareness and the promotion of its values. Most importantly, teachers need to feel empowered to tackle the challenges posed by ELF, and they also need to feel competent to adapt the courseware to suit the needs of an EFL classroom (Sifakis and Fay, 2011.) Learners also have an active role in creating a supportive environment in their EFL classroom. They may be asked to talk about themselves, their national or cultural background, and at the same time, they have to be aware of the techniques that they use in order for their message to be comprehended by their interlocutors. When focusing on communication, they have to monitor their communication process and successfully deal with communication breakdowns, and at the same time recognize the

reasons for breakdowns and apply correct repair methods. Ultimately, learners need to be encouraged to learn about their interlocutors' personalities and cultural background (Sifakis, 2004). In class, teachers must be communication-oriented, realistic, challenging and motivating. They also must not ask learners to be someone else (i.e. native speakers) or to treat them as cultural stereotypes, but to treat them as individuals who can contribute to the learning process with their innovative ideas (Sifakis, 2004).

Honna (2012) emphasizes the importance of the term “intercultural literacy”, which acts similarly to Baker’s ICC, but it is more of a pedagogical response to the diversity of Englishes (Honna, 2008 in Honna, 2012). One of the main components of intercultural literacy is teaching awareness of language, whose main goal is to develop sensitivity and tolerance towards linguistic diversity. Honna believes that this awareness can help with dealing with miscommunication issues across cultures. If the goal is to develop a language awareness program for ELT, information from sociolinguistics and cognitive linguistics are needed. He claims that cognitive linguistics, specifically figurative and creative language, could help us understand better the concept of World Englishes and ELF (Honna, 2012). The sentence “That restaurant is very delicious.” may sound strange and awkward from a native point of view since a building cannot be delicious, but in Japanese English it is a legitimate sentence. The sentence “Helen is sharp” goes within the same line of correctness; it may sound weird in some Englishes since Helen is a person, not an instrument, but the sentence is considered correct in SE. Consequently, Honna encourages the idea that a correctness of a sentence should not be judged on whether the speaker is a native or a non-native speaker. Both sentences work fine if said by natives or non-natives, and that is the general idea behind figurative awareness. Therefore, learners need to be trained in figurative/creative awareness in ELT, so they can be sensitive to unfamiliar expressions coming from different cultures. It also

needs to be mentioned that natives are not exempt from this concept as figurative awareness applies to them if English is to be used as an international language (Honna, 2012).

Regarding grammatical accuracy, it should be viewed in light of a functional approach to language learning, as a contribution to communicative competence (Sifakis, 2004). Assessment could include features shared by all English varieties, and writing tasks should not be based on Inner Circle values and rules. Teaching vocabulary should be based on relevant and more frequent lexis, and it should not be limited to native cultural contexts. Teaching of culture should get away from Inner Circle values and traditions, and it should focus on developing strategies which promote intercultural communication (Holliday, Hyde, and Kullman, 2004 in Drljača Margić and Vodopija-Krstanović, 2016). Listening to different texts would help students become familiar with the multifaceted nature of English today, understand different accents and also encourage them to not conform to native English accents. Coursebook authors need to be more sensitive of the diversity English consists of in today's society, and they need to be more assertive when it comes to promoting ELF. Moreover, linguists and other ELF scholars need to provide teachers with specific guidelines on how to tackle the challenge of ELF implementation in classrooms (Drljača Margić and Vodopija-Krstanović, 2016).

## **4. English language teaching in Croatia and Finland**

### **4.1. ELT in Finland**

In a recent newspaper issue in Finland, one could read about the possibility of implementing sexual education in kindergartens (Cacciatore, 2016), a topic which would be sensitive to discuss in many countries in the world, but not that much in Finland. When it comes to education, Finland has always been progressive and a role-model for other countries. Their PISA (The Program for International Student Assessment) results in recent history

made their education system extremely popular, and many other countries seek to find out why Finland, a country of 5 million people, excels in the department of education. Although their PISA project results have dropped in recent years, their reputation as one of the top PISA project countries is still enviable.

An interview with an English teacher in an upper-secondary school, Saara Tähtelä, revealed that ELT is no exception to the rule. Most children in Finland start learning English at the age of 9 (grade 3), when they also have a possibility to choose other languages, such as Russian, German, Spanish or French, depending on the city and the region. Not surprisingly, around 90% of them choose English, and when they do not, they have to opt for English in grade 4 or 5. They cannot start studying English in school in the first two grades, unless the child is attending an international English-speaking school or a private language school. Some children also come in contact with English in kindergartens or through preschool education.

In general, the Finnish education system is divided into several sections or parts. The first one is pre-primary education, which Finns start with when they are six years old and which lasts for one year. Basic education consists of comprehensive schools (elementary and lower-secondary schools) and lasts for 9 years. After they complete their basic education, they can choose whether they want to continue their education in upper-secondary schools or in vocational schools.

Governing bodies responsible for their education system are the Finnish National Board of Education and the Ministry of Education and Culture. One of the most important documents regarding language teaching is the National Core Curriculum (NCC) (for pre-primary education, basic education, general upper-secondary education, and vocational upper-secondary education). The NCC for basic and pre-primary education was renewed in 2014 and for upper-secondary in 2005, and a new NCC for pre-primary, basic and general upper-

secondary education is to be implemented in 2016. Regarding language teaching in upper-secondary schools, the NCC is responsible for the first eight courses<sup>1</sup> of the English language. Each additional English course depends on the school-specific curriculum and their financial budget for that academic year. The city, on the other hand, is responsible for practical implementation. These additional English courses are usually culture courses where students learn about different cultures and countries where English is spoken (S. Tähtelä, personal communication, July 14, 2016).

The final step before graduating from upper-secondary school is the Matriculation exam which has been criticized by some teachers. According to the study by Huuskonen and Kähkönen (2006), English teachers in Finland believe matriculation exams restrict them from teaching oral skills. They have to prepare students for the test which only tests listening and writing skills (Korhonen, 2010). My four-month teaching assistantship in Finland confirmed the stereotype that Finns dislike when they are being called out. There is a lack of focus on developing communication skills and this could be explained by focusing exclusively on preparing students for the Matriculation exams.

The Finnish language curriculum is largely based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), and the idea promoted in CEFR can be seen in the NCC (Korhonen, 2010). When finishing grade nine, students' target level is B1 for listening and reading, and A2 for speaking and writing. Upon the completion of their upper-secondary education, they should be at B1.

A future English teacher first has to apply to study English and then apply for a teacher training program. Around 10% of applicants are accepted based on their test results and

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<sup>1</sup> The general upper-secondary education is course-based. For example, English is divided into six obligatory courses and two additional courses for advanced students: Englannin kieli ja maailmani (ENA 1), Ihminen verkostoissa (ENA 2), Kulttuuri-ilmiöitä (ENA 3), Yhteiskunta ja ympäröivä maailma (ENA 4), Tiede ja tulevaisuus (ENA 5), Opiskelu, työ ja toimeentulo (ENA 6), Kestävä elämäntapa (ENA 7), Viesti ja vaikuta puhuen (ENA 8).

interviews. Statistics from Tampere University show that out of 818 applicants for programs in English language, literature and translation studies in 2016, only 60, or 7,3% got in. Similarly, for the elementary school teacher program in Tampere, there were 1966 applicants, and only 70 were accepted. Getting into college in Helsinki, Turku or Tampere is a challenging task, so many Finns choose to study in Vaasa, Joensuu or Jyväskylä. Most English teachers also teach another language, if not two. Because of the financial cuts in education, teachers of more than one language are very much in demand (S. Tähtelä, personal communication, July 14, 2016).

The Finnish National Board of Education announced that a new curriculum for pre-primary education, basic and general upper-secondary education would be enforced starting from the academic year 2016/2017. Their new curriculum is very supportive of the idea of ELF and World Englishes, as many scholars and teachers have recognized the importance of English and their use between non-native speakers. To be more specific, course 1 (Englannin kieli ja maailmani) in upper-secondary schools includes World Englishes; Ethiopian and Jamaican English varieties and accents are discussed. Very important to mention is the fact that their English textbooks are mostly written by Finns, and Finnish is used when explaining certain language parts, e.g. grammar (S. Tähtelä, personal communication, July 14, 2016).

#### **4.2. ELT in Croatia**

In a recent newspaper issue in Croatia, one could see that the national curricular reform is still in the making (HINA, 2016), and Croatia's PISA results from 2006, 2009 and 2012 show below-average results (Kustura, 2013). Basing his conclusions on the results of his study carried out among Croatian employers, Lowther (2004) states that the education system



in Croatia should be changed from supply-driven to demand-driven, i.e. the system needs to provide students with options they could choose from.

Most children start learning English at the age of 6 or 7, when enrolling in first grade of elementary school. They have an opportunity to start learning English earlier, in kindergartens which offer special language programs and in private language schools. Most students continue learning English up until the last grade of high school, but it depends on the type of high school they choose and languages the school offers. Students are expected to be at A2 level upon finishing elementary school, and at B2 when graduating from high school. Once they finish elementary school, which is obligatory and lasts for eight years, they have an option to choose either a vocational high school or a grammar school, which is the Croatian equivalent to the Finnish upper-secondary school.

The most important document which serves as a guideline for teaching is the National Curriculum Framework for Preschool Education and General Compulsory and Secondary Education (Nacionalni okvirni kurikulum za predškolski odgoj i obrazovanje te opće obvezno i srednjoškolsko obrazovanje – NOK 2010). “The National Curriculum Framework is the foundation for the definition of expected student achievements in all subjects” (NOK 2010: 5) which “defines core educational values, educational goals, principles and goals of educational areas, principles of evaluation of student achievements, and principles of evaluation and self-evaluation of the implementation of the national curriculum” (NOK 2010: 9). In language teaching, it focuses on writing, listening, speaking and writing, and it includes learning about different cultures. It encompasses all educational levels and types of schools (Drljača Margić and Vodopija-Krstanović, 2016).

ELT in grammar schools relies heavily on native-speaker ideal because of two important documents which provide the base for course design: CEFR and the Curricular

Approach to Changes in Course Design in Grammar Schools issued by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports in 2003 with the aim of reducing students' workload (Ministarstvo znanosti, obrazovanja i sporta – MZOS 2014). Both documents focus exclusively on the NES model, primarily British and American English and are limited to Inner Circle culture, which leaves little space for the implementation of ELF and various English language varieties. Coursebooks follow a similar pattern as they are also based on the NES model and on the cultures of Inner Circle countries. In grammar schools, almost all coursebooks used in teaching are written by native speakers (the most popular being Headway). The situation is slightly different in elementary schools where some coursebooks written by Croatian authors are used, but the focus still remains on the NES ideal and their culture.

At the end of their secondary education, in order to graduate, students must take the National Secondary School Leaving Examination. Foreign language is mandatory, and, not surprisingly, most students choose English. There are two levels at which they can take the test: lower and higher, with the latter predominantly being chosen by grammar school students. Three skills are tested in the Examination: listening, reading and writing, and all three are based on the NES model (M. Matejčić, personal communication, June 8, 2016).

In order to become an English teacher in Croatia, one must obtain a Bachelor's degree by enrolling in a English language and literature program which lasts for three years, followed by a two-year Master's teaching program in English language and literature. Some universities require an additional proficiency test that all potential applicants need to take before officially enrolling in the program.

It seems that Croatia to a larger extent relies on the NES teaching model and the situation is unlikely to change in the near future as the NES ideal is encouraged on almost all

educational levels, and the new curricular reform, which might bring some changes to ELT, has not yet been put forward by the governing bodies.

## **5. Present study**

### **5.1. Aims and predictions**

The aim of this study was to determine whether ELF can be a valuable alternative when it comes to ELT in Croatia and Finland. The answers to the two overarching questions: “Is there a need for a new approach to teaching?” and “Do students judge their competencies according to the norms and rules of SE, i.e. British or American English?” were used to deepen our understanding of students’ attitudes towards ELT.

### **5.2. Participants and context**

The sample consists of 174 high school students; 96 attending a Finnish upper-secondary school and 78 attending a Croatian grammar school. All students participating in the research were aged 17 or 18, and were in their last year of high school education. The research in Finland was conducted using an online platform for questionnaires, and the link was provided to the students during English classes. All the students were monitored and the teacher was present in case clarifications were necessary. The students used smartphones, tablets and PCs to access the questionnaire. The research in Croatia was also conducted in class, but printed copies of the questionnaire were administered. The students were monitored and explanations were provided upon request. Anonymity was guaranteed to all the participants.

### **5.3. Research method**

The questionnaire used in this research comprised three parts: current state of ELT in their school, attitudes toward ELT, and what ELT in their school should be like. It took them approximately 20-25 minutes to complete the questionnaire.

In the first part, the focus was on finding out which English variety their English teachers use and to what degree certain features of ELT are taught in class. After that, the students were asked to write down all the features of ELT they would like to keep, but also what they would like to change among the features provided.

The second part consisted of 16 statements, followed by a Likert-type scale, investigating their attitudes towards ELT. The students were also asked to answer several open-ended questions regarding their satisfaction with what is taught: their preparation for using English in real-life situations, the feeling that they have when speaking English in class, their opinion on ELT being based on native-speaker English, and their opinion on ELT being potentially based on English used in global communication.

The third part consisted of 12 statements which referred to what ELT in schools should be like. They were also asked to answer questions about the learning outcomes and assessment in ELT, and what they would like to change if they could.

### **5.4. Results**

It should be noted that the results of this research are based on statistically significant differences, where all the conditions for a T-test for independent samples have been met.

Table 1. English language variety

English language variety	Croatia		Finland		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
American English	3	4	11	11	14	8
British English	42	54	25	26	67	39
A combination of different English language varieties	31	40	56	58	87	50
Don't know / can't estimate	2	3	4	4	6	3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>174</b>	<b>100</b>

As it is visible from Table 1, British English is the prevalent variety in the Croatian grammar school, while a combination of different English varieties seems to be the most popular option in the Finnish upper-secondary school under study. American English seems to be the least popular option.

Table 2. Focus of ELT

English language teaching in my school is focused on:		Never (1) + Rarely (2)		Sometimes (3)		Often (4) + Always (5)	
		n	%	n	%	n	%
<i>Learning grammar</i>	Croatia	1	1	13	17	64	82
	Finland	0	0	20	21	76	79
	Total	1	1	33	19	140	80
<i>Developing communication skills</i>	Croatia	9	12	29	37	40	51
	Finland	5	5	27	28	64	67
	Total	14	8	56	32	104	60
<i>Learning new words, expanding vocabulary</i>	Croatia	0	0	17	22	61	78
	Finland	2	2	18	19	76	79
	Total	2	1	35	20	137	79
<i>Pronunciation exercises</i>	Croatia	28	36	28	36	22	28
	Finland	25	26	43	45	28	29
	Total	53	30	71	41	50	29
<i>Reading comprehension *</i>	Croatia	5	6	12	15	61	78
	Finland	12	13	46	48	38	40
	Total	17	10	58	33	99	57
<i>Listening comprehension *</i>	Croatia	0	0	15	19	63	81
	Finland	5	5	35	36	56	58

	Total	5	3	50	29	119	68
<i>Improving writing skills</i>	Croatia	1	1	20	26	57	73
	Finland	16	17	47	49	33	34
	Total	17	10	67	39	90	52
<i>Learning about cultures of English-speaking countries</i>	Croatia	23	29	38	49	17	22
	Finland	35	36	35	36	26	27
	Total	58	33	73	42	43	25
<i>Learning about other native English language varieties (e.g. Irish English, Australian English)</i>	Croatia	50	64	17	22	11	14
	Finland	54	56	34	35	8	8
	Total	104	60	51	29	19	11
<i>Learning about non-native English varieties (e.g. Indian English, Kenyan English)</i>	Croatia	61	78	10	13	7	9
	Finland	82	85	11	11	3	3
	Total	143	82	21	12	10	6

Results from Table 2 reveal that there are a lot of similarities between the two schools and the focus of ELT is mostly on the same things: learning grammar, expanding vocabulary and to a lesser degree, developing communication skills. The last two categories, learning about other native and non-native English varieties, are never or rarely the focus of ELT. Regarding statistically significant differences, they are noted in terms of reading and listening comprehension.

Reading comprehension:  $T(172) = 5,493$ ;  $p = 0,00$

Croatia:  $M = 4,12$ ,  $SD = 0,897$ ; Finland:  $M = 3,39$ ,  $SD = 0,851$

Listening comprehension:  $T(172) = 3,663$ ;  $p = 0,00$

Croatia:  $M = 4,14$ ,  $SD = 0,716$ ; Finland:  $M = 3,71$ ,  $SD = 0,820$

Croatian students seem to be tested on reading and listening comprehension much more than Finnish students; 78% to 40% in the former, and 81% to 58% in the latter. Even though the result is not statistically significant, it should be also mentioned that it seems like more focus is put on developing writing skills in the grammar school.

When asked what they would like to keep as it is in the English language classroom, Croatian students gave various answers and all of them featured most of the ELT segments included in the table. Significantly, 35% of them said they would like to keep reading and listening comprehension tasks, and 30% of them would like to keep communication exercises. Here are some of their answers:

*Reading exercises to improve our vocabulary and learn how to pronounce.*

*Developing communication skills because it's important for us and for our future. Learning new words, expanding vocabulary because it's always great to find out and learn new stuffs and expand our knowledge. Reading and listening comprehension. Improving writing skills.*

*Reading and expanding vocabulary, learning about cultures of English speaking countries*

*Communication skills, expanding vocabulary, learning about other cultures, improving writing skills*

*Developing communication skills because it is important to be confident and learning grammar because it is a base for any language.*

*Developing communication skills, improving writing skills, learning new words, expanding vocabulary because it is important to improve your knowledge*

*I would keep the part where we develop our communication skills because it is one of the best way we can learn a language right and it is important because english becomes more and more often in different countries.*

*Reading and listening comprehension because that is important for understanding native English speakers and because we need that for our matura exam.*

When asked what they would like to change, most of them also gave a range of different answers. The largest number of the participants (30%) opted for the following actions: to know more about native and non-native English varieties, and to work more on their communication skills.

*I would like to focus more on communication skills because I think speaking is the most important part of learning languages. Also I think we should focus more on writing skills.*

*Learning about other native and non-native English varieties because I would like to know more about them.*

*Learning about non-native English varieties, learning about other native English language varieties (I'm interested in it). I would put much bigger focus on developing communication skills, because I consider it the most important part when learning a foreign language.*

*English language teaching should be more communication-oriented.*

*More learning about cultures of English-speaking countries and more learning about non-native English varieties and native English language varieties.*

*I would change the fact that we're not developing our communication skills because I think that's the most important part of our English language teaching.*

*Method of learning and teaching, more communication exercises because in the future it's more important to communicate than how your knowledge of grammar in general is.*

On the other side, 39% of the Finnish students claimed they would keep everything as it is; the focus being on expanding vocabulary, grammar and developing communication skills. None of the Croatian students said they would like to keep everything as it was; their answers always included different features, mostly reading and listening comprehension, as well as communication skills.

*I would keep the system that is now in my school because it benefits me as a student.*

*I would keep it this way because we study things diversely, not too much or too less anything*

*I don't have too strong of an opinion on the subject. Maybe we could focus more on training our pronunciation but otherwise I'd say it's a pretty even mix.*

*To my mind the system is very good already. Especially I like the way that we are taught new words related to the issues discussed. Kahoots are a fun and an effective way to learn. Grammar is also important and it is good to study it little by little, not everything at once.*



*I would keep it as it is. It offers a good balance on varying subjects, while keeping focus on things students have yet to learn, while not focusing too much on stuff you get from movies and internet.*

*I would keep almost everything as it is, as I see no problem in the way that English is being taught to us.*

*I think that English courses in my school are good in the form they are now. I would explain this with my opinion on that the courses are good and they suit me well.*

When it comes to change, 47% of Finnish students would like to alter something. Most of their answers were focused on three features: working more on their pronunciation, developing communication skills and learning about other varieties.

*I would like to learn more about native and non-native English varieties. Maybe more about native English varieties.*

*I would like to focus more on talking English because I think that is more important than learning fancy words.*

*If there was more different teaching methods, where students could improve more etc., learning English could be easier and more interesting*

*I would want to learn different accents*

*Perhaps we should have more conversations where we learn to express our opinions. Learning about different English-speaking (native and non-native) countries' culture would be useful too. Through conversation the students could also improve their pronunciation.*

*Maybe a little bit more about other cultures and other English than just British and American English.*

*I would change that we wouldn't focus so much on grammar but learning how to speak English and how to express oneself.*

*After studying English for 7 years it's quite easy now so it would be good to have more challenging exercises and pronunciation exercises*

Table 3.

STATEMENT		It doesn't apply to me at all (1) + It doesn't apply to me (2)		Neither does, nor doesn't apply (3)		It applies to me (4) + It fully applies to me (5)	
		n	%	n	%	n	%
<i>I believe that a good knowledge of the English language is important for my future education and life in general.</i>	Croatia	0	0	6	8	72	92
	Finland	0	0	1	1	95	99
	Total	0	0	7	4	167	96
<i>I am motivated to study English at school.</i>	Croatia	3	4	17	22	58	74
	Finland	2	2	14	15	80	83
	Total	5	3	31	18	138	79
<i>I am satisfied with the English language variety my teacher uses.</i>	Croatia	10	13	8	10	60	77
	Finland	0	0	11	11	85	89
	Total	10	6	19	11	145	83
<i>I believe the primary goal of English language teaching is to learn the rules and norms of Standard English.</i>	Croatia	11	14	30	38	37	47
	Finland	18	19	31	32	47	49
	Total	29	17	61	35	84	48
<i>I believe the primary goal of English language teaching is to learn how to effectively communicate with others, while paying attention to the rules and norms of Standard English.</i>	Croatia	4	5	8	10	66	85
	Finland	3	3	18	19	75	78
	Total	7	4	26	15	141	81
<i>I believe the primary goal of English language teaching is to learn how to effectively communicate with others, not necessarily paying attention to the rules and norms of Standard English.</i>	Croatia	20	26	29	37	29	37
	Finland	18	19	30	31	48	50
	Total	38	22	59	34	77	44
<i>It matters to me that my English language teacher speaks like a native English speaker.</i>	Croatia	14	18	14	18	50	64
	Finland	14	15	21	22	61	64
	Total	28	16	35	20	111	64
<i>It matters to me that I communicate in English as much as possible with my teacher and other students in English classes.</i>	Croatia	3	4	21	27	54	69
	Finland	17	18	20	21	59	61
	Total	20	11	41	24	113	65

<i>I feel that too much attention is given to pronunciation and grammatical correctness in English language teaching. *</i>	Croatia	26	33	25	32	27	35
	Finland	47	49	33	34	16	17
	Total	73	42	58	33	43	25
<i>I feel that too little attention is given to speaking and developing communicative competence in English language teaching. *</i>	Croatia	13	17	26	33	39	50
	Finland	33	34	26	27	39	41
	Total	46	26	52	30	76	44
<i>It matters to me that my teacher corrects my pronunciation.</i>	Croatia	1	1	12	15	65	83
	Finland	7	7	30	31	59	61
	Total	8	5	42	24	124	71
<i>It matters to me that my teacher corrects grammatical mistakes in my spoken English. *</i>	Croatia	2	3	8	10	68	87
	Finland	5	5	30	31	61	64
	Total	7	4	38	22	129	74
<i>When communicating with my teacher and other students, I focus on grammar rules, sentence structure and pronunciation.</i>	Croatia	3	4	23	29	52	67
	Finland	26	27	29	30	41	43
	Total	29	17	52	30	93	53
<i>When communicating with my teacher and other students, I focus on the message I have to deliver to my interlocutor.</i>	Croatia	0	0	19	24	59	76
	Finland	3	3	10	10	83	86
	Total	3	2	29	17	142	82
<i>In class, I would like to find out more about other English varieties, such as Irish English, Jamaican English, Indian English, etc. *</i>	Croatia	20	26	15	19	43	55
	Finland	40	42	20	21	36	38
	Total	60	34	35	20	79	45
<i>English language teaching in my school prepares me for using English on a global level. *</i>	Croatia	4	5	12	15	62	79
	Finland	1	1	6	6	89	93
	Total	5	3	18	10	151	87

Statistically significant differences in Table 3 were observed concerning the following aspects:

1. Too much attention given to pronunciation and grammatical correctness in ELT

$T(172) = 2,207, p = 0,029$

Cro:  $M = 2,94, SD = 1,073$ ; Fin:  $M = 2,59, SD = 0,969$

Thirty-five percent of Croatian students felt like too much attention was given to pronunciation and grammatical correctness in ELT (Finns – 17%), while the opposite was perceived by 49% of Finnish students and 33% of Croatian students.

2. Too little attention is given to speaking and developing communicative competence in ELT

$T(172) = 2,383, p = 0,018$

Cro:  $M = 3,49, SD = 1,137$ ; Fin:  $M = 3,06, SD = 1,195$

Similarly, 50% of Croatian students felt like too little attention was given to speaking and developing communicative competence in ELT. Forty percent of Finnish students shared the same opinion, and 34% of them disagreed with the statement (opposite to only 17% of Croatian students).

3. It matters to me that my teacher corrects grammatical mistakes in my spoken English

$T(172) = 4,198, p = 0,000$

Cro:  $M = 4,33, SD = 0,767$ ; Fin:  $M = 3,81, SD = 0,850$

As many as 87% of Croatians considered teacher's correction of their spoken English important, and the same went for 64% of their Finnish colleagues.

4. I would like to find out more about other English varieties

$T(172) = 2,972, p = 0,003$

Cro:  $M = 3,49, SD = 1,214$ ; Fin:  $M = 2,92, SD = 1,295$

Croatians felt more open to finding out more about other English varieties (55% to 38%). In contrast, 42% of Finnish students and 26% of Croatian students considered knowing more about other English varieties unnecessary.

5. ELT in my school prepares me for using English on a global level

$T(172) = -2,060, p = 0,041$

Cro:  $M = 4,14, SD = 0,908$ ; Fin:  $M = 4,39, SD = 0,655$

Ninety-three percent of Finnish students felt like their school prepared them for using English on a global level; 79% of Croatians agreed with the statement.

Not statistically significant, but still noteworthy are the following results: 87% of Croatian students felt like it was important that the teacher corrected their pronunciation (opposite to 64% of Finns), and 67% of them focused on grammar rules, sentence structure and pronunciation when communicating in class (Finns – 43%). Conversely, only 4% of Croatians and 27% of Finns did not share the same opinion.

Regarding the satisfaction with what is taught in English classes, 70% of Croatian students expressed their approval of the current content.

*I like that we always have an interesting topic and that the teaching is interactive, we have space to express and explain our opinion.*

*I am very satisfied with English in my school. My teacher is very good, kind and she really knows how to teach us. She corrects my pronunciation and grammatical mistake when I talk, and she is focus very well on how to prepare us for our future.*

*Yes, I like the program and the methods that the teacher is using. I like reading classic english novels and learning about their authors. I also think is useful learning about both english and non-english culture.*

*Yes, because we learn more than just the language - we learn about different cultures and what's going on in the world.*

*Yes, I think I learned enough to communicate and understand native English speakers.*

*I think that any of us could communicate well with people who are native English speakers.*

On the contrary, only 19% of Croatian students were not happy with what was taught and their criticism was mostly oriented towards the lack of developing communication skills.

*I'm not satisfied at all with my English classes because we have focused too much on grammar rules and too little on developing our communication possibilities which is in my opinion the most useful thing for our future.*

*No, because we do too much grammar exercises and too little communication so we don't develop communicative skills or pronunciation.*

*English classes are not concentrated on everyday english that we really need. For example I consider learning synonyms completely unnecessary.*

*I am not satisfied with the way all the foreign languages are taught in public schools because there is almost no speaking exercises and even when it is, it is poorly done as we rush to finish till the end of class.*

*I think my English class in school is not focused enough on communicating and expanding our vocabulary.*

*Because teachers are focused on grammar and rules, rather than encouraging students to talk. There are too many reading comprehension which are boring and long and they don't matter that much. They are preparing us for matura exams so they keep giving us extra work but if they had thought us properly for the past few years, they wouldn't have been stressing us out now. IT NEEDS TO BE CHANGED!*

Almost 90% of Finnish students claimed they were satisfied with what is being taught in English:

*Yes I am. I believe the current style of learning helps me communicating online and in person.*

*Yes, I'm satisfied. Our teachers are good and motivated. They also want us to do well and they are here for us if we need help.*

*Yes, because I think that I can easily communicate in English and I know how to speak (and write) in English*

*Yes, the things we are taught are more than enough for most uses I can think of right off the bat.*

*Yes, I feel that that the lessons are appropriately challenging.*

*Yes, I am satisfied. I feel that in our school I can achieve good enough skills to continue my studies. The themes discussed are versatile and timely. Studying is both relaxed and motivating.*

*Yes, because it keeps the focus on global nature of english language nowadays while teaching about anglophone culture as a sidenote as well.*

Only 6% of them felt like that there is something missing in their classes and were not satisfied.

*We should all talk more about random things and not just the exercises because they are too controlled. People put more effort on the written skills than the spoken and I don't find that good for the English language communication.*

*English teaching should be based more on smaller grammatic details than just basic grammar rules which everybody already knows*

*No, the teachers suppose that we know every single word and rule and that's why they don't TEACH very much but give us instructions for what exercises we should do.*

*No, as it could be more variative and go deeper in the subjects*

*I think it's too much about grammar and little things. I know those things are going to make me do well in exams but I'm not here to learn for them but for life.*

Eighty-four percent of Croatian students also felt like the ELT in their school had prepared them for using English in different life situations.

*Yes, I can communicate with anyone who speaks English and keep a flowing conversation, I can read books written in English and understand all of it, even some other accents*

*Yes, because I can communicate with native English speakers and I can watch movies/ series or read a book without the need to translate*

*I think that English in my school has improved the way I talk. You know you can use a language if you can argue in it and that's what we did in a few debates we had in class.*

*Yes it has, because we learn to deal with problems put in front of us and to act quickly in different life situations.*

*Yes it has prepared me for all kinds of situations and made me comfortable to speak with English speaking people (native speakers)*

*Yes, it is. All I have to say is that I'm visiting England every summer and I have no troubles in communication with native English speakers.*

*Yes, I can speak English with my British friends almost if I were a real Englishman.*

Only 13% of Croatians felt like the ELT in their school had not prepared them for using English in various conditions.

*Not so much, television and internet helped a lot more.*

*Well, as I said we spent the most of time learning grammar. Sometimes we have spoken and have little discussions, but I think that it didn't prepare me enough for every situation.*

*No, not at all. We do not learn how to communicate, we learn to pass the test!*

*Not really, because our teacher hasn't delivered to us the fully knowledge of the English language. My knowledge of English is based mostly on what I knew and what I learned by myself.*

*Nah..I prepared myself. School had very little (positive) impact on my English.*

Similarly, 93% of Finnish students thought the ELT in their school had prepared them for using English in different life situations, and only 1% of them thought differently.



*Yes because we've learned communicating in normal life situations and also vocabulary for work life*

*Yes, it has. Thanks to these studies, I have gained deeper understanding over how to deal with social situations. And I'm not just talking about purchasing a train ticket or chatting with friends abroad, but also taking part in serious discussions over all sorts of subjects.*

*When meeting people from other countries I've noticed that it's easy for me to communicate with them.*

*Yes because I can communicate about different things with different people because the teaching has been good.*

*I guess every lesson prepares us for using English in our everyday life. We also get good tips, like how not to mix certain words and how to express some things idiomatically.*

*Yes. Teaching in school has given me confidence to use english in different situations. For instance in multicultural exchange programs.*

*Everything we learn in English classes are meant to be used when we communicate in English, so yes of course.*

Students were also asked if they felt comfortable when speaking English in class, and the Croatian students responded affirmatively, i.e. 75% felt rather comfortable when speaking English.

*I feel very confident and secured also I'm very happy when my teacher corrects me.*

*I feel good because no one judge me and if I make some mistake while speaking teacher would correct me.*

*Sometimes I feel nervous but most of the time it is not a big problem to me. I know that even if I make a mistake my teacher will correct me and that is important. We are in school to learn.*

*Confident because my teacher respects our participation and encourages us to express our opinions.*

*I feel comfortable because I know nobody will laugh to me and that is the way of learning.*

*All students are polite and they are listening. They are ready to help if you have problems with some words or phrases.*

*I feel good, and I'm glad when my classmates correct me about my wrong pronunciation.*

On the other hand, 21% of them did not feel comfortable when using English in front of their colleagues and the teacher.

*Stressed, because I learned english just 4 years before and I make a lot of mistakes and often they mock me.*

*Not confident, I prefer writing and listening.*

*I don't like speak in English in class because I think I'm bad at pronunciation.*

*I'm not satisfied with my speaking skills because in my opinion I haven't enough opportunity for developing it, although I know a lot of English words. I often felt anxious.*

*I feel shy and nervous.*

*I am ashamed, because I have a problem with sentence structure.*

*I am often scared that I'll say something wrong and I don't usually like raising my hand and explaining my opinions in English in class.*

These results are in line with the results in Finland. Seventy-one percent of students in the upper-secondary school felt comfortable when using English in the classroom.

*It is fine to me because in that way we learn how to communicate with other people outside the class too.*

*Pretty comfortable, my pronunciation isn't perfect but I manage*

*I know that it doesn't matter if I make few mistakes. I'm in English class to learn English. I'm not afraid to speak in class.*

*It feels quite natural at this point. I feel as if English has become my second mother tongue.*

*I feel comfortable, because I know it's okay to make mistakes and you learn from them. Also that everyone makes mistakes makes me feel better while speaking*

*I feel excited, because that way I can practice my pronunciation and general conversation.*

*It's just the same as speaking finnish. I like english, and I know that I pronounce properly and speak good english in general.*

Like in Croatia, 21% of Finnish students felt uncomfortable when using English in front of their colleagues.

*I'm not really that comfortable in speaking in frlnt of my whole class but I'm quite okay with it among my friends*

*In front on the class I hate it, but just talking to my friends it's ok.*

*I dont like it at all i just feel embarassing and uncomfortable*

*I'm confused and nervous especially if the teacher is listening*

*When I have to speak with just my partner, it's fine and I like it. But I don't like to raise my hand or speak in bigger groups.*

*I don't like it. I feel a little bit pressure from classmates. More better to do speak exercises in small groups*

*I hate speaking English in front of the whole class, but I enjoy discussions in smaller groups*

*It's nice if I can talk with my friends, but if I have to talk in front of the class it's terrible.*

When asked how they felt about the fact that ELT was based on English as used by its native speakers, especially British and American English, 78% of Croatian students considered it to be the norm, which should be conformed to.

*It's ther mother language so I guess It is fine. You won't learn it better either way.*

*I feel ok, thanks. It's smart because otherwise we would all speak different english and it wouldn't be english*

*I feel good about it because I will probably be in a situation where I have to interact with a native speaker*

*I'm ok with that fact. British and American (English) are official varietis of English in world's communication, so it is necessary for English to be based on the way native speakers use it.*

*It is only right - the ones who know a language best are the ones who invented it.*

*That's good, because English came from England so it's only logical to learn it as such!*

*I think it's okay, because the language should be delivered to students as grammatically correct, but it wouldn't hurt to learn about different cultures and accents.*

*I think it's good because once you know British or American English, you know most of it and everybody can understand you. Plus, having British accent sounds so sophisticated.*

*It's better to learn every language by the rules of its native speakers. Its students learn that way the grammar of specific language better and quicker and in the process of communicating to a native speaker to a non-native speaker the student is forced to give it all to transfer the message of communication.*

*We can try making pidgeon English the standard, but it would be bad, wouldn't it. Most people trought the world are thought the language by those standards. It should not change.*

Only about 5% of Croatian students expressed their discontent with the pattern.

*I think we should learn about other varieties of the English language because there are many countries where English is spoken and we rarely hear about those.*

*I think we should focus on all English speakers even if it's not their first language.*

*I don't like British English.*

Eighty-three percent of Finnish students agreed with the native forms being the norm in ELT.

*It is a good thing because if I speak english it is usually with native speakers*

*Obviously we need to learn British and American English because those are the countries where you need English the most. Everybody can survive in Australia, for example, by using American English.*

*It's fine because at the moment it's the global standard*

*I think that's how it's should be because otherwise it would get too complicated to teach and learn every accent and style of speaking.*

*I personally really love British accent and most of the English speakong people are from those countries so I'm really fine with it.*

*I feel it's the best way, because other foreign speakers base their speaking on the native speakers.*

*Well, I guess there would be no point in studying English if we couldn't understand the native speakers. If you want to learn a language, of course you will have to study the grammar and vocabulary correctly and to know how the language works. So, I find it almost vital to study the language native speakers speak.*

*It's a good thing because other varieties of English are based on them.*

*I'd say that the English is mostly used in its American form, and therefore it's sensible to learn it the way it's used the most. They don't teach dialects of my native language in the school either.*

While around 8% of Finns did not express their opinion on the matter, only around 7% of them expressed that the native model was useful, but it needed some changes. Only one student stated he was not happy with the current teaching model.

*I think we need more variety because of globalization. For example understanding different accents would be important but it isn't taught*

*It's great, but would like to know more about how they speak in other countries*

*I think it's okay but it would be nice if there were more information about English varieties.*

*From a historical standpoint this is quite understandable. However, it would be very useful to study English used in other countries as well.*

*It makes sense but I would love to learn English based on non-native speakers as well*

*It's a positive thing since English is spoken mainly based on those two kinds of English, but I'd still like to learn some other countries' English so I wouldn't be lost in case I decided to travel somewhere where the spoken English is different.*

*It's good to start with understanding native speakers, but as the studying progresses it would be good to concentrate on understanding not so flawless English.*

Interestingly, 58% of Croatians recognized at least one advantage of ELT being based on English used in global communication between natives and non-natives, comprising deviations from SE.

*We would understand each other better on our own national basis.*

*It is very helpful because it allows both speakers to understand what other is saying*

*We can all understand each other and there would be less misunderstandings.*

*What it's only metter is that, that people can understand eache other.*

*It would prepare students for communication with non-natives better.*

*The universality of the language, the overall understanding that comes from the language itself.*

*Being able to talk to all people around the world.*

*Being able to communicate with a wide range of speakers.*

Conversely, 64% of Croatian students were able to identify disadvantages of ELT being based on the above-mentioned variety.

*We should all know British English well, so there should be no problems in understanding each other. What are we supposed to do, learn English in different accents so we could understand each other? It's apsurd.*

*We would have even more different versions of English and maybe it would include further misunderstandings and a need to learn all these new forms of language.*

*Not everyone can learn the same way. It may be more difficult for some nationalities to pronounciate certain words.*

*It is not the real Standard English.*

*A native might not understand you too well.*

*Neglecting rules of Standard English.*

*Certain pronunciation mistakes that could lead to miscommunication. Lack of someone's vocabulary.*

*There might be some problems while speaking because some words are different from place to place.*

*Native languages were developing for centuries so native languages are richer than these artificial so we would lose a lot.*

*Not English in its whole - simplified.*

In comparison, only around 20% of Finns were able to recognize at least one advantage in ELT being based on global communication.

*The advantages are that the both sides understand the common language, as English is the latin of our day*

*The advantages are that we learn a standard way of communication which can then be made richer with different words and expressions.*

*The advantages: you really learn some stuff that you can use in normal life*

*Advantages is that I think that usually when I speak English it's not with another Finn so it would be good to learn*

*The advantages: it's global, so you should be fine with it wherever you go.*

*Good thing would be that students would realize that there are many ways to speak English.*

*Advantages would be understanding different accents and variations of English language.*

*I think it is good to remind people that English is spoken by non-natives too.*

*Advantages: students would learn English more the way that it is communicated*

More Finns (27%) were able to associate disadvantages with the model described above.

*Everyone speaks English differently. It would be stupid to teach for example British or Indian accent... Does "global English" even exist? All nations have their own way of doing it and still we can understand each other. Italian, Czech or Swede, I haven't had any problems to communicate with them even though we all say things differently. No "global English", just the same basics for all students.*

*I feel that when talking with someone (for example from Japan) who doesn't speak English so well, I feel that my speaking gets worse too*

*It depends on how well do the speakers speak English. It may not be very handful between non-native English speakers.*

*I guess that it would cause the language like, well, spreading so that eventually people couldn't understand each other as everyone would learn the language differently. Native speakers' language gives the norms, which makes it easy for all of learn the same rules. Of course non-native speakers don't always speak in totally correct manner, but it is usually easy to understand what the other one is saying or to find out how to explain things without knowing the words. And where is it most likely to need English, if not in Britain or America?*

*Disadvantages could be that people never learn even the basics of speaking English fluently like a native speaker.*

*Problems: people would learn to talk English wrong way*

When asked if they thought ELT should be based on English used in global communication, around 51% of Croatians agreed.

*I agree, the most important is that we understand each other.*

*It should. It helps you to know English in this world and it should be compulsory.*

*Yes, because it is efficient in getting your message across.*

*Yes, because the most important thing is for different non-native speakers to understand one another.*

*I would love for schools to find a healthy/good balance between that and standard method (grammar, reading comprehension, ..)*

*Yes, there should be a standard concept of English which is being used for learning. If everybody learns by the same concept, later it'll be easier to understand the other learners.*

*I think it should be based on global communication.*

Only 18% of Croatian students disagreed with their colleagues.

*I think the form of English we are learning now is most commonly accepted in the world and therefore is the best one regarding worldwide communication.*



*No, but it should be taken into consideration. We should be aware that people will speak differently*

*It shouldn't because the original English would be lost*

*Everyone should know English as it is spoken by natives.*

*The English taught as it is right now is good enough. It's important to know grammar as well as vocabulary.*

*No, because it is not a language we learn then but a mix that will not be useful in our lives.*

*I think educational systems should strive to achieve a native-like level of English which should start in primary education and end with secondary - highschool.*

As for Finnish students, only 26% were in favor of this new approach to teaching, while 27% felt like the native model should remain the norm in ELT.

*If teaching English would be on the same level in all countries there would be a language in the world everyone can speak.*

*It could be easier, speaking with non-natives (that way you don't get the feeling that you're bad at English),*

*Yes, because English has currently the status as the language of the world, and it's not just used between English-speakers and non-English speakers. The important is that it's standard enough, that everyone understands it, based on his learnings at school.*

*Probably yes. This way people could communicate easier.*

*At later rate after we have learned to speak British/ American English, it would be useful to learn different types of English to make sure that we can communicate with other than native English speakers*

*I think that there should be a balance between the two of them. Beginners could focus on speaking English like native speakers and more advanced people could try to understand the different variations of the language.*

*I think English should be taught as native speakers speak it*

*No I really don't think so. It's important to learn the correct language. If we would start to study "global English", it would soon become like Esperanto, not a real language, but an artificial one.*

*I think some form of standard is needed so it might as well be British/American.*

*No. We shouldn't copy american or british english either. Basic grammar rules are necessary, but fancy old British ways to say something are not. Keep it the way it is now. Everyone seem to understand eachother. In my view Indian people might sometimes speak english more clearly than irish people.*

Table 4.

STATEMENT		Strongly disagree (1) + Disagree (2)		Neither agree nor disagree (3)		Agree (4) + Strongly agree (5)	
		n	%	n	%	n	%
<i>Changes are necessary in the way English is taught in schools.</i> *	Croatia	8	10	37	47	33	42
	Finland	36	38	32	33	28	29
	Total	44	25	69	40	61	35
<i>English pronunciation in class has to be modeled upon native speakers.</i>	Croatia	10	13	33	42	35	45
	Finland	9	9	34	35	53	55
	Total	19	11	67	39	88	51
<i>English pronunciation in class could be modeled upon non-native speakers too.</i>	Croatia	16	21	35	45	27	35
	Finland	35	36	31	32	30	31
	Total	51	29	66	38	57	33
<i>English language teaching should be mostly communication-oriented.</i>	Croatia	3	4	12	15	63	81
	Finland	11	11	27	28	58	60
	Total	14	8	39	22	121	70
<i>English language teaching should be focused mostly on learning grammar rules and norms.</i>	Croatia	25	32	32	41	20	26
	Finland	39	41	36	38	21	22
	Total	64	37	68	39	41	24
<i>If the communication goal is accomplished and the message successfully delivered, the teacher should ignore minor grammatical mistakes.</i>	Croatia	14	18	18	23	46	59
	Finland	25	26	17	18	54	56
	Total	39	22	35	20	100	57
<i>If the communication goal is accomplished and the message successfully delivered, the teacher should ignore the</i>	Croatia	16	21	27	35	35	45
	Finland	17	18	32	33	47	49

<i>pronunciation not being native-like.</i>	Total	33	19	59	34	82	47
<i>English language teaching should be simplified and the teaching should be based on teacher-student interaction. *</i>	Croatia	16	21	27	35	35	45
	Finland	36	38	36	38	24	25
	Total	52	30	63	36	59	34
<i>English language teaching should be practical, flexible and intercultural.</i>	Croatia	6	8	9	12	63	81
	Finland	4	4	20	21	72	75
	Total	10	6	29	17	135	78
<i>The ultimate goal of learning English should be the achievement of native-like competence. *</i>	Croatia	8	10	34	44	35	45
	Finland	20	21	39	41	37	39
	Total	28	16	73	42	72	41
<i>Communicative orientation in English language teaching would reduce my language anxiety, and boost my spontaneity/confidence. *</i>	Croatia	4	5	15	19	59	76
	Finland	7	7	33	34	56	58
	Total	11	6	48	28	115	66
<i>English as used by native speakers should be the only criterion when it comes to grading, i.e. giving marks in class.</i>	Croatia	29	37	32	41	17	22
	Finland	42	44	33	34	21	22
	Total	71	41	65	37	38	22

In Table 4, statistically significant differences were found regarding following statements:

1. Changes are necessary in the way English is taught in schools

$$T(172) = 3,679, p = 0,000$$

$$\text{Cro: } M = 3,41, SD = 0,844; \text{ Fin: } M = 2,89, SD = 1,004$$

Most Finns did not believe that changes were necessary (38%), while the same opinion was shared by only 10% of their Croatian colleagues. On the contrary, 42% of Croatians felt that changes were needed, and the same went for 29% of Finnish students.

2. English teaching should be simplified and based on teacher - student interaction

$$T(172) = 2,997, p = 0,003$$

Cro:  $M = 3,31$ ,  $SD = 0,916$ ; Fin:  $M = 2,86$ ,  $SD = 1,012$

Most Croatians (45%) agreed with the statement, and only 25% of Finns thought the same. Thirty-eight percent of them believed teaching should not change, which was also the belief of 21% of Croatians.

3. The ultimate goal of learning English should be the achievement of native-like competence

$T(171) = 2,024$ ,  $p = 0,045$

Cro:  $M = 3,51$ ,  $SD = 0,927$ ; Fin:  $M = 3,22$ ,  $SD = 0,931$

Forty-five percent of Croatians and 39% of Finns believed this should be the ultimate goal. Interestingly, only 10% of Croatians and 21% of Finns disagreed with the statement.

4. Communicative orientation in ELT would reduce my anxiety and boost my confidence.

$T(172) = 2,949$ ,  $p = 0,004$

Cro:  $M = 4,01$ ,  $SD = 0,845$ ; Fin:  $M = 3,64$ ,  $SD = 0,835$

In line with the other results, more Croatians (76 to 58%) were open to implementing communicative orientation in ELT.

Other results showed that most Finns and Croatians agreed that if the message was successfully delivered, teachers should ignore minor grammatical mistakes and pronunciation not being native-like. They also agreed that teaching should be mostly communication-oriented. When asked if the pronunciation in class could be modeled upon non-native speakers, both Croatians and Finns had very divided attitudes. Both groups also strongly agreed that ELT should be practical, flexible and intercultural.

When asked what the outcomes of ELT should be and how they differed from the existing ones, more than 80% of Croatian students put emphasis on fluent communication skills. Many also emphasized the role of native speakers.

*Learning outcomes should be: student can successfully deliver and understand delivered message. Differ: too much focus put on grammar*

*Ability to speak and write in English and also to understand text or a speaker in English. I don't think it differs a lot from the existing one.*

*Learners should speak at least closely as native speakers*

*Better communication skills - more fluently talking with natives*

*The existing result is the achievement of native-like competence, and it should stay that way.*

*Be able to communicate and interact easily with all native speakers.*

*Outcomes should be understanding the language as much as possible (reading, watching TV, speaking to others with no problem...) Problem is that not everyone gives attention and then they don't learn as much as they could.*

*We are so focused on studying grammar and all the rules and yet we are unsure when we need to apply them in communication. English language teaching should make us confident in our knowledge and prepare us for communication in real life situations.*

Forty-four percent of Finnish students also put emphasis on fluent communication skills.

*I believe the ultimate goal is to learn the language and have a grasp on it, that is almost native-like. I want to have fluent conversations with english and I believe teaching here in clasu can help me get to that point.*

*You should be able to read and speak English competently, and I believe the current state of teaching succeeds in this*

*Give people possibility to come along and understand people from different countries. Teachers should use more international contacts and excercises that have an actual outcome so that people would see what really is the point of learning and get motivation from it.*

*For me the most important goal is to achieve such good skills that I can later move on to university. It is also good to be able to get along with English-speaking people and foreigners. I find the existing system pretty good, as we*

*learn grammar and vocabulary but are also encouraged to use English without fear of mistakes.*

*To be able to communicate with other english-speakers clearly, while understanding the grammar of the language.*

*The goals are pretty much those of the current system in Finland: learning to communicate and write in English and understand the culture. The clear pronunciation is important too, so that should keep on being a goal.*

When it comes to assessment in class, most Croatians (around 22%) referred to the importance of their communication skills being assessed more frequently. Some students also mentioned that the knowledge about other English-speaking countries and literary works should also be assessed.

*Communication over test results. Studying matters but languages cannot be compared to math or biology. It matters how much does the student know by herself/ himself*

*Communication should be assessed in class more, since languages are used primarily for it.*

*I would add more vocabulary and spelling exercises. More book reports.*

*To now how to communicate with others in all kind of situations grammar should be important to but less in grades that it is now.*

*We should learn more about other countries in witch English is spoken.*

*More communication throught the class, talking to your classmates, getting message across, setting debates.*

*The culture of other countries should be assessed in English classes, it differs on the base of how much more we learn.*

*Examinations should be orientated toward the ability to communicate and deliver the message and less so to achieve grammatic perfection.*

Most Finnish students did not state their opinion on this matter. Others emphasized the importance of communication skills, knowledge about other cultures, grammar skills and pronunciation being assessed more in class.

*How well can you speak English.*

*To my mind the assessment should be based on participation but also the tasks given and the tests done. Unfortunately, without any testing it might be difficult to estimate students equally. I think that it wouldn't really be fair if hard work didn't have any impact.*

*The global nature of the English should be explored more with given interest on how other non-native speakers speak English*

*Grammar skills, pronunciation and communicating in English in general. I think it's good the way it is now.*

*Pronunciation should be assessed among communication skills. All in all speaking skills should be more assessed*

*Ability to communicate in a way that the other person understands completely*

If Croatian students had the power to change something, they would focus more on communication, watch more movies and read more literary works. Some, however, would not change anything, as they believed the current system met their needs.

*I would play more interactive games during class and read some poetry, teach about great literature and ways to start and hold conversations. It should be fun and educational at the same time.*

*I wouldn't change anything, everything now is fine and suits my needs.*

*I would try to make it less dull and more attractive by including students into different projects, let them know their opinion matters and get them all to work because they want to not because they have to.*

*I think there are easier ways to learn languages. For example you can learn languages much faster if you focus on speaking and translating text than learning grammar or some words by heart.*

*Focusing on more conversations and less grammar, putting students and their abilities first instead of strictly and blindly following rules.*

*I would add more speaking exercises to improve communication, to make it easier for everyone to handle awkward situations when they find themselves in them.*

*Maybe I would give an option of reading some books in English as an addition to regular lessons. It would be some popular and famous English literature as Harry Potter or some Shakespeare play.*

Most Finnish students would like to have more communication exercises and learn about Englishes spoken in different countries. Some of them, like their Croatian colleagues, would not change anything.

*Would want to know about other countries accents*

*I don't think that the teaching needs to be changed.*

*I would include English used in other countries.*

*For example talking to friend school's students in the other country. Some listening comprehensions could also be done with movies and/or youtube videos. They are not only listening but the point is to understand what the clip is about.*

*More speaking and interacting between students and strangers so its easier to start to speaks english*

*I would add more communication between student from different countries. Good ways would be trips to other countries but also daily interaction. It would be nice if student could make friends from other countries too*

*There would be more about the culture and other varieties. Teacher would personally tell you what you're doing well and what you should change in your way of talking English.*

## **5.5. Discussion and implications**

The findings show that there are some significant differences between the two countries, which will be discussed in detail in this chapter, and several implications for ELT will be suggested.

Croatian teachers mostly rely on the native British English variety in ELT, although they also use different English varieties. Finnish teachers mostly employ a combination of different



English varieties, while the use of American English is rather neglected in both countries. One of the possible explanations for these results is that British English has always been popular among teachers of English since some teachers feel that allowing non-mainstream varieties of pronunciation will result in unprepared students for the world outside (da Silva, 2015). Finns are mostly oriented towards different combinations of English varieties, and their new curriculum to be implemented in the fall of 2016 puts emphasis on other and often ignored English varieties, which could be the reason why teachers there are employing different English varieties in class. Generally speaking, teachers should encourage the use of different English varieties, step away from the old traditional pattern where only British and American English are considered to be appropriate in class and become aware of the global role of English. Exposing students to various English accents tends to improve their understanding of different pronunciation patterns, as well as different techniques of expressing their thoughts (da Silva, 2015).

Regarding the focus of ELT in their school, both countries follow the traditional pattern where language learning is directed towards grammar, vocabulary and communication (to a lesser degree). Statistically significant results show that the focus on listening and reading comprehension is slightly greater in Croatia, while learning about other native and non-native English varieties is neglected in both countries. It seems that even though Finns are exposed to different varieties, the teaching process does not reflect the use and it does not include actual knowledge about different English varieties. This could mean that the combinations Finnish teachers use comprise dominant native English varieties, namely British and American English, which would confirm the significant influence native-speaker ideology has had on ELT policy (cf. Vodopija-Krstanović and Brala-Vukanović, 2012). Besides the native varieties, another possibility is that the variety that the teachers use is influenced by their L1. In addition, it could also be the case that their use of different English varieties is not a

reflection of their openness towards different varieties; it could be their traditional pattern of learning and teaching English they are used to. Interestingly enough, the results reveal that Croatians seem to be more open to learning about other varieties of English than their Finnish colleagues.

If we compare these results with what they would like to keep and change in ELT, it can be seen that Croatians would like to keep reading and listening comprehension tasks, and Finns would mostly like to keep everything as it is. Guidelines for future teaching practices should be looked for among the things students would like to change. Both Croatian and Finnish students emphasize the need for more communication developing exercises and the wish to know more about non-native and native English varieties, as a nice addition to their traditional teaching pattern. High school students, especially the ones in their last year, are aware of the fact that the knowledge of English primarily entails communication skills, i.e. delivering the message. When learning a foreign language, the ultimate goal should be to understand and be understood (da Silva, 2015). Teachers should promote exercises for developing communication skills based on real-life situations and encourage all students to participate in debates and discussions. Learning about different varieties should also be encouraged as it helps students understand the English language diversity. In order to communicate efficiently, students need to be sensitive to other people's linguacultural background (Smith, 1992). When English is used as a lingua franca, a skilled communicator is the one who is capable of accommodating their language (Jenkins, 2007).

The traditional native model of teaching is visible in the fact that they deem important for their teachers to speak like a native and that they correct student pronunciation. Also, most of the students hold that attention should be paid to the native-speaker norms when communicating in English, and behave accordingly. Being associated with a native speaker is a commodity that many students want to possess. They tend to judge negatively those who

prefer to keep the features of their L1 in their spoken English (da Silva, 2015). Statistically significant differences show that Croatian students feel like too much attention is given to pronunciation and grammatical correctness, while Finns completely disagree with this. Croatians also feel too little attention is directed to developing communication skills, while Finns' opinions are divided. One may conclude that these attitudes reflect the current teaching practices in both countries and their teachers' preference for certain features of the language, and that there are actually no differences in the students' perceptions and attitudes towards ELT. However, several guidelines for future teaching practices could be drawn out; first, Croatians and Finns both want more communication-oriented exercises, and second, they do not think that this orientation should affect the focus on pronunciation and grammar in class.

What separates ELF from other native-speaker forms is the fact that its multilingual speakers negotiate English according to their values, traditions and interests. The success of their interaction is not based on a single norm (British English, Nigerian English or even LFC); it is "the adoption of context- and interaction-specific communicative practices" that help them achieve intelligibility (Canagarajah, 2014: 769). The reason why ELF should be encouraged in ELT is because it moves the emphasis from grammatical proficiency to students' competence of negotiating the diversity of grammatical features in interactions, which is the key for achieving communicative success (Canagarajah, 2014). If interactions are based on different languages, backgrounds and values, it means that it is really hard to achieve communicative success if our knowledge of the language is based on a predictable set of grammatical norms (cf. Canagarajah, 2014). It would be wrong to conclude that grammar is not important in ELF. Notably, ELF sees grammar as an emergent notion, not as a preconstructed feature. In order to achieve mutual intelligibility, two ELF speakers construct norms which are influenced by the knowledge of the languages the speaker knows. (Canagarajah, 2014).

Both groups of students believe that ELT in their school has prepared them for using English on a global level. The question that arises is: how do they perceive English as a global language? Both groups also state that ELT has prepared them for using English in different life situations. However, in their answers a lot of the students mention that they are ready to use English in different situations because they are able to have a fluent conversation with a native speaker. Students need to be reminded that their linguistic environment primarily consists of non-native speakers (cf. Matsumoto, 2011). When they eventually graduate from high school, considering the fact that non-natives outnumber natives by a large number, they will most likely communicate with non-natives and use ELF as a main communication tool. The role of teachers is to encourage communication in ELF and, once aware of the global status of English in the world, raise their students' awareness of significant sociopolitical issues involved in the language learning (da Silva, 2015). Although it cannot be said that an exclusive exposure to native varieties does not prepare students for communication with non-native speakers, students' choices need to be taken into consideration. Teachers should not be the ones restricting the exposure of students to different varieties (da Silva, 2015).

Both Croatian and Finnish students feel that ELT should be based on English as used by native speakers. Their answers also suggest that it would be ridiculous to model it differently as that is the only appropriate option and if changed, they would not learn proper English and natives would have a hard time understanding them. It seems that the ideal of native varieties and accents is difficult to root out from the EFL teaching practice (cf. Vodopija-Krstanović and Brala-Vukanović, 2012). Croatians are more successful in associating advantages and disadvantages with using ELF than their Finnish colleagues. Their answers to the former included better understanding of non-natives, easier communication, cultural exchange and different ways of speaking. Answers to the latter included: not the real English, intelligibility and pronunciation issues, lack of grammar and neglecting rules. It may be concluded that

Croatian students are more open to the idea of ELF becoming a part of ELT as they seem to understand better what ELF actually means in the globalized world and what it would mean for ELT. The study conducted by Galloway and Rose (2013) revealed that the students had positive attitudes towards ELT once they were actually exposed to ELF in an everyday situation, which means that opinions of both groups could be influenced by actually incorporating ELF features in the classroom.

This conclusion is confirmed by the fact that 51% of Croatians claim that ELT could be in fact modeled upon English used in global communication, and the same opinion was supported by only 27% of Finnish students. It has to be mentioned that this question was asked after they had to list advantages and disadvantages of using ELF, which could have influenced their answer. Subtirelu (2013) argues that even though students notice difficulties and the impossibility of satisfying native-speakers forms, they still view it as the ideal model for teaching. Hence, the focus in teaching should be shifted from producing accurate native-speaker forms to enhancing intelligibility in the communication between non-native speakers (Sifakis, 2014).

Worth mentioning is the fact that most Finns and most Croatians feel comfortable when using English in class. This is very important for ELF since working on communication skills leads to students' fears subside when using English in front of their colleagues and teachers. Teachers should also find a way to encourage all students to participate in conversations and help the ones who do not feel confident enough. ELF is also directed towards them as it focuses on the message, and not on the structure. Students could freely express their own opinion without paying too much attention to grammar and sentence structure. If one looks at the answers from the upper-secondary school students, they could notice that students who express they do not feel comfortable using English in the classroom claim that they are comfortable using English in small groups, but when using English in front of everybody,

they are under a lot of stress. Teachers should encourage the idea of working on communication skills in small groups in Finnish schools as it would probably reduce students' language anxiety. They should also supervise them, actively join their conversations and emphasize the importance of getting the messages across. The fear of speaking outside small groups is probably the reason why most Finns disagree with the possibility of ELT being based on teacher – student interaction, while most Croatians support this concept. Blommaert (2010) suggests that we shift our attention from “immobile languages” to “mobile resources”, and that we should consider building communication on the resources from diverse languages. What guides our choice of resources is not the linguistic background we come from, but the goal of communication and the social context (Blommaert, 2010).

Most Croatians believe that changes in ELT are needed, while most Finns disagree with the claim. It is evident that most Finns, even though they would change a couple of things, generally believe their system does not need to be changed. In contrast, most Croatians are ready to change the way English is being taught in school. Nault (2006) claims that ELT is bound to change as the future users will start to reshape English, instead of naively imitate speakers considered to be the legitimate gatekeepers of the language (cf. da Silva, 2015).

Even though Croatians list the advantages of using ELF in the classroom, and would like English teaching to become more focused on communication, they still hold that the ultimate goal of ELT should be the achievement of native-like competence (as opposed to most Finns, who neither agree nor disagree). In other words, Croatian and Finnish students agree that the ultimate goal of ELT should be the achievement of fluent communications skills, but most students specify “native-speaker skills” as the ultimate goal. Jenkins (2007) emphasizes that accent has the strongest influence on language-based attitudes, and da Silva (2015) goes one step further and claims that the preference for a certain variety is not attributed to linguistic reasons, but to connotations attached to the country or people represented by it. If students

state that they prefer one accent over the other, particularly if they are able to understand both, it is evident that the choice is not based on phonological reasons (da Silva, 2015).

## **5.6. Concluding remarks**

In its simplest definition, ELF refers to the English that is used as a contact language among speakers who do not share the same L1 and the same cultural background (Jenkins, 2005). Seidlhofer (2004) claims that ELF is independent of the native forms to a considerable degree, and is developing in parallel with native English. Descriptions of ELF are rather a novelty in linguistics, with the main research being based primarily on the spoken language: lexicogrammar, pragmatics, academic English and pronunciation (Jenkins, 2005). As Jenkins (2005) points out, the descriptions of ELF will have to be completed and codified in order for ELF to stand a chance against native-speaker forms. However, it is highly unlikely that there actually is a codifiable form of ELF given the fact that ELF is not a unitary variety of English (cf. Vodopija-Krstanović and Brala-Vukanović, 2012; Sharifian, 2009).

It can be concluded that ELF, implying a more communication-oriented classroom, paying less attention to grammar rules and pronunciation, and learning about different English language varieties could be a viable solution in ELT in Croatia. Students are also able to identify advantages and disadvantages of such an approach, and most of them agree this could be a good future teaching model. The same, however, cannot be said for their Finnish colleagues, who would like their teaching to be more communication-oriented, but in general, they think that their teaching system does not need any changes. They are less open to the introduction of different English varieties, and they still feel that grammar exercises are a vital part of ELT. They are less inclined to associate advantages and disadvantages with ELF, and did not express satisfaction with ELF becoming a model for teaching English. Results on both

sides suggest that there is a need for a new approach to teaching – a more flexible approach which would involve native and non-native English varieties, and which would prepare students for using English on a global level. This approach should also bring ELF closer to students who are still judging their competencies according to native ideals. Even though the results from the upper-secondary school in Finland do not go in favor of ELF and this new approach, the new curriculum is supposed to change these opinions to an extent. Croatian students are seeking a change in the way English is taught in school, and they expressed the need to be equipped with communication skills, which would enable them to advance professionally in their life. It is up to the teachers and educators to realize that something, indeed, needs to be changed. Therefore, an option like ELF seems like an appropriate solution to satisfy students' needs and an option which will help them achieve their linguistic potential.

However, it has to be noted that native varieties should not be (completely) disregarded in favor of ELF since non-native speakers around the globe are able to talk to each other thanks to native varieties which are a common means of communication. What is needed is a more flexible approach to language policy which will enable non-native speakers to deal with language obstacles in an easier manner. “It is important to appreciate that all language use – amongst whatever combination or grouping of native and non-native speakers – is situated, variable and subject to hybridizing influences” (Sewell, 2013: 3). Using an ELF perspective in teaching does not mean that native norms are no longer needed, but that these are mutable concepts, and learners need to be aware of language variations (Sewell, 2013). Language learners need to take into consideration the fact that even though ELF is based on linguistic flexibility, it is required that they achieve some sort of native-like competence. ELF is especially useful when it comes to identifying features necessary for the accommodation to international communication (Sewell, 2013). In conclusion, speaking English should not be associated with a particular accent, and it should be acknowledged that speaking English will



sometimes involve features uncharacteristic of native-speaker models. English speakers need to be aware of the shift between different contexts and various cultural backgrounds, since their use of the language will adapt according to different circumstances, making the idea of fixed norms of correctness unattainable (Sewell, 2013).

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## Appendix

### QUESTIONNAIRE

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Dear students,

This questionnaire is being conducted as a part of research for a master's thesis. The goal is to deepen our understanding of students' attitudes towards English language teaching. It takes approximately 20 minutes to complete the questionnaire.

Anonymity is guaranteed.

Thank you for your participation!

#### ***I. English language teaching***

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##### **Which English language variety does your teacher use?**

1. American English
2. British English
3. A combination of different English language varieties.
4. Don't know / can't estimate.
5. Another variety (which one?) \_\_\_\_\_

<b>English language teaching in my school is focused on:</b>	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
Learning grammar	1	2	3	4	5
Developing communication skills	1	2	3	4	5
Learning new words, expanding vocabulary	1	2	3	4	5
Pronunciation exercises	1	2	3	4	5
Reading comprehension	1	2	3	4	5

Listening comprehension	1	2	3	4	5
Improving writing skills	1	2	3	4	5
Learning about cultures of English-speaking countries	1	2	3	4	5
Learning about other native English language varieties (e.g. Irish English, Australian English)	1	2	3	4	5
Learning about non-native English varieties (e.g. Indian English, Kenyan English)	1	2	3	4	5

1. By looking at the information from the table above, what would you like to remain as it is, and what would you change ( in terms of the frequency, the methods, etc.) in English language teaching in your school? **Please, explain your answer.**

I would keep..

I would change..

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**II: Attitudes towards English language teaching**

STATEMENT		It doesn't apply to me at all	It doesn't apply to me	Neither does, nor doesn't apply	It applies to me	It fully applies to me
1.	I believe that a good knowledge of the English language is important for my future education and life in general.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	I am motivated to study English at school.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	I am satisfied with the English language variety my teacher uses.	1	2	3	4	5
4.	I believe the primary goal of English language teaching is to learn the rules and norms of Standard English.	1	2	3	4	5
5.	I believe the primary goal of English language teaching is to learn how to effectively communicate with others, while paying attention to the rules and norms of Standard English.	1	2	3	4	5
6.	I believe the primary goal of English language teaching is to learn how to effectively communicate with others, not necessarily paying attention to the rules and norms of Standard English.	1	2	3	4	5

7.	It matters to me that my English language teacher speaks like a native English speaker.	1	2	3	4	5
8.	It matters to me that I communicate in English as much as possible with my teacher and other students in English classes.	1	2	3	4	5
9.	I feel that too much attention is given to pronunciation and grammatical correctness in English language teaching.	1	2	3	4	5
10.	I feel that too little attention is given to speaking and developing communicative competence in English language teaching.	1	2	3	4	5
11.	It matters to me that my teacher corrects my pronunciation.	1	2	3	4	5
12.	It matters to me that my teacher corrects grammatical mistakes in my spoken English.	1	2	3	4	5
13.	When communicating with my teacher and other students, I focus on grammar rules, sentence structure and pronunciation.	1	2	3	4	5
14.	When communicating with my teacher and other students, I focus on the message I have to deliver to my interlocutor.	1	2	3	4	5
15.	In class, I would like to find out more about other English varieties, such as Irish English, Jamaican English, Indian English, etc.	1	2	3	4	5

16.	English language teaching in my school prepares me for using English on a global level.	1	2	3	4	5
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2. Are you satisfied with what is taught in English classes in your school? (you can answer both with yes and no.)

If yes, **please explain your answer.**

If not, **please explain your answer.**

3. Has the English language teaching in your school prepared your for using English in different life situations? **Please explain your answer.**



4. How do you feel when you (have to) speak in English in class? **Please explain your answer.**

5. How do you feel about the fact that English language teaching is based on English as used by its native speakers, especially British and American English? **Please explain your answer.**

6. What would be the advantages and disadvantages/problems of English language teaching being based on English used in global communication between its (native and) non-native speakers (e.g. between a Croatian and a Finn, or a Croatian and an American), comprising deviations from Standard English?

The advantages:

  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  

The disadvantages/problems:

7. Do you think English language teaching should be based on the English described above (regardless of the disadvantages/problems)? **Please explain your answer.**

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**III:What should English language teaching be like?**

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STATEMENT		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1	Changes are necessary in the way English is taught in schools.	1	2	3	4	5
2	English pronunciation in class has to be modeled upon native speakers.	1	2	3	4	5
3	English pronunciation in class could be modeled upon non-native speakers too.	1	2	3	4	5
4	English language teaching should be mostly communication-oriented.	1	2	3	4	5
5	English language teaching should be focused mostly on learning grammar rules and norms.	1	2	3	4	5

6	If the communication goal is accomplished and the message successfully delivered, the teacher should ignore minor grammatical mistakes.	1	2	3	4	5
7.	If the communication goal is accomplished and the message successfully delivered, the teacher should ignore the pronunciation not being native-like.	1	2	3	4	5
8.	English language teaching should be simplified and the teaching should be based on teacher-student interaction.	1	2	3	4	5
9.	English language teaching should be practical, flexible and intercultural.	1	2	3	4	5
10.	The ultimate goal of learning English should be the achievement of native-like competence.	1	2	3	4	5
11.	Communicative orientation in English language teaching would reduce my language anxiety, and boost my spontaneity/confidence.	1	2	3	4	5
12.	English as used by native speakers should be the only criterion when it comes to grading, i.e. giving marks in class.	1	2	3	4	5

8. What should be the learning outcomes/results of English language teaching and how do they differ from the existing ones?

9. What should be assessed in English classes and how, and how does it differ from the existing assessment criteria/methods?

10. If you had the power to change anything in English language teaching, what would it be and how would you do it? **Please explain your answer.**