การสอนภาษาอังกฤษในฐานะภาษากลางเพื่อการสื่อสาร: หลักการและหลักการสอนสำหรับห้องเรียนพหุภาษา
Teaching English as a Lingua Franca (ELF): Principles and Pedagogical Approaches for Multilingual Classrooms

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บทคัดย่อ

บทความนี้นำเสนอหลักการและหลักการสอนภาษาอังกฤษในฐานะภาษากลาง (English as a Lingua Franca: ELF) เพื่อเสริมสร้างการเรียนการสอนที่มีประสิทธิภาพในห้องเรียนพหุภาษา โดยเสนอแนวคิดหลักของความสามารถทางภาษา 3 ประการ ได้แก่ (1) การใช้ภาษาที่ต่างจากรูปแบบของเจ้าของภาษาโดยให้ความสำคัญต่อการทำความเข้าใจภาษาอังกฤษในฐานะภาษาเพื่อการสื่อสาร (2) การยอมรับความหลากหลายของสำเนียงและไม่ยึดติดกับสำเนียงเจ้าของภาษา และ (3) การส่งเสริมให้ผู้เรียนสื่อสารอย่างคล่องแคล่วและราบรื่น เพื่อสร้างความเข้าใจร่วมกัน นอกจากนี้ยังนำเสนอแนวทางการสอนที่เน้นความอ่อนไหวทางวัฒนธรรม บรรทัดฐานทางภาษาที่ยืดหยุ่น การยอมรับความผิดพลาด และการตระหนักรู้ทางวัฒนธรรม รวมถึงกรอบแนวคิดการสอน เช่น การเรียนรู้โดยใช้ภารกิจเป็นฐาน (Task-Based Learning: TBL) การสอนแบบบูรณาการเนื้อหา (Content-Based Instruction: CBI) การเรียนรู้จากสถานการณ์จริง (Real-World Learning: RWL) และการสอนภาษาเพื่อการสื่อสาร

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คำสำคัญ: หลักการ ชั้นเรียนพหุภาษา แนวทางการสอน ภาษาอังกฤษในฐานะภาษากลาง

Abstract

This article presents the principles and pedagogical approaches of teaching English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) to enhance effective teaching and learning in multilingual classrooms It proposes three core principles of language proficiency: (1) moving beyond native-speaker norms by emphasizing comprehension of communication in English as lingua franca, (2) embracing accent diversity while de-emphasizing native-like pronunciation, and (3) promoting fluency for smooth and mutual communication. Furthermore, it highlights key pedagogical approaches such as cultural sensitivity, flexible linguistic norms, error tolerance, and cultural awareness. Complementary teaching frameworks, including Task-Based Learning (TBL), Content-Based Instruction (CBI), Real-World Learning (RWL), and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) are emphasized, these approaches aim to fostering inclusive learning environments and effective intercultural communication.

Keywords: Principles, Multilingual Classroom, Teaching Approaches, English as a Lingua Franca (ELF)

Introduction

In classrooms where students come from diverse linguistic backgrounds, English often functions as the primary medium of instruction and interaction. In such contexts, English is described as a lingua franca (ELF), a common language used among speakers of different first languages (Guerra et al., 2019). Unlike a standardized variety, ELF is dynamic and fluid, constantly shaped by contextual factors, the cultural and linguistic diversity of its users, and the negotiated meanings that emerge in interaction (Sifakis et al., 2018). This complexity makes ELF particularly significant in multilingual classrooms, where it is employed for decision-making, negotiation, and problem-solving. To address this reality, scholars and practitioners have highlighted the need for guiding principles and pedagogical approaches that support the effective use of ELF. This paper, therefore, examines two key considerations of ELF in multilingual classrooms, with emphasis on three principles of English language proficiency and pedagogical principles alongside the application of pedagogical approaches.

Multilingual classrooms are increasingly common worldwide, driven by globalization, migration, and student mobility. Multicultural classrooms typically include learners who may use one language at home, another at school, and even study a third as part of their curriculum (Ollerhead & Taylor-Leech, 2019). While such diversity enriches the learning environment, it also creates communication challenges. In these settings, ELF becomes a necessary pedagogical resource for ensuring mutual understanding, yet its success relies on how teachers and students develop and apply principles of effective communication.

Fundamental principal concerns proficiency in English. Language proficiency is crucial not only for grasping teachers' instructions but also for facilitating smooth peer interaction among students with diverse cultural and linguistic norms. Insufficient proficiency can result in miscommunication, dissatisfaction, and bias, thereby limiting the potential of ELF in the multilingual classroom (Doiz et al, 2011; Gullo et al., 2018). To mitigate these risks, pedagogy must include practices that strengthen learners' communicative competence while acknowledging their multilingual repertoires.

Pedagogical principles play a crucial role in addressing linguistic and cultural diversity in multilingual classrooms. The ways in which teachers design and implement instructional strategies directly influence how difference and inclusion are experienced in learning environments (Canagarajah, 2013). Pedagogical principles grounded in openness and inclusivity enable English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) to operate as a resource for equity rather than a marker of exclusion. This entails adopting principles that acknowledge and integrate students' multilingual repertoires, encourage intercultural dialogue, and tailor instruction to accommodate diverse learning preferences and communicative practices (Karacabey et al., 2019).

Taken together, these principles illustrate that the successful use of ELF in multilingual classrooms depends not only on language proficiency but also on pedagogical principles that promote inclusion and intercultural understanding. Framing ELF through principles and pedagogies therefore provides a more comprehensive understanding of its role in the contemporary multilingual classroom.

Multilingual Classroom and ELF

Multilingual classrooms consist of students who speak different languages and come from various ethnic backgrounds (Khan, 2023). These classrooms are becoming increasingly common globally due to the rapid rise in migration and mobility, leading to diverse linguistic and cultural student populations (Ollerhead & Taylor-Leech, 2019).

In these contexts, students commonly employ one language in the home environment, another as the language of schooling, and frequently acquire an additional language through the formal curriculum (Jaspers, 2024). The advantages of a multicultural classroom include ample opportunities for students to express themselves orally, learn from other cultures, and gain an enriching experience that opens their minds to global diversity (Crystal, 2003). However, lessons must be carefully planned to consider cultural sensitivities and group activities should be thoughtfully designed to manage potentially divisive topics (Pritchard, 2012).

English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) refers to the use of English as a common means of communication among speakers from different first-language backgrounds, particularly in multilingual and intercultural contexts (Guerra et al., 2019). Unlike traditional views of English as tied to native-speaker norms, ELF highlights its dynamic, adaptive, and fluid nature, shaped by the communicative needs of its users (Jenkins & Panero, 2024; Junnier, 2024). Research emphasizes that ELF interaction prioritizes mutual intelligibility, negotiation of meaning, and pragmatic strategies over strict grammatical accuracy, making it highly relevant for global communication in academic, professional, and everyday domains (Sifakis et al, 2018; Taglialatela, 2024). In this sense, ELF is not merely a simplified form of English but a complex, evolving resource that facilitates intercultural collaboration and reflects the diversity of its speakers worldwide (Mauranen, 2018).

English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) in multilingual classrooms reveals diverse applications and outcomes across different educational contexts. Park (2022) examined ELF interactions among multilingual university students, finding that linguistic identities were constructed through interactional exploitation of phonology and nationality, with students negotiating their identities by evaluating different ways of speaking English. In elementary education, Weran and Sa'adah (2023) investigated ELF strategies used by teachers to engage students who barely spoke English, identifying effective techniques including repetition, paraphrasing, code-switching, using pictures, and help-seeking that enabled students to grasp material more easily. Turnbull (2018) explored ELF use in second language classrooms, discovering that English was employed to varying degrees based on proficiency levels, with multilingual learners generally welcoming its use as it provided security and comfort while bridging the gap between their first language and developing Japanese skills.

Principles of Language Proficiency of EFL in Multilingual Classrooms

Explicit principles of language proficiency play a crucial role in effectively teaching English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) in linguistically diverse classrooms, ensuring meaningful learning outcomes. One central focus is the fluency, which highlights the importance of enabling learners to express ideas smoothly and continuously, prioritizing communicative flow over grammatical perfection (O'Dowd et al, 2020). Alongside this, the accent diversity emphasizes that learners should become comfortable with the plurality of English accents, recognizing intelligibility rather than native-like pronunciation as the key to successful communication (Güney, 2023). Equally important is the Comprehension, which fosters the ability to understand and interpret diverse varieties of English, including unfamiliar sentence structures, ambiguous utterances, and weak discourse coherence (O'Dowd et al., 2020). Together, these principles encourage learners to reflect on language use, critically analyze communicative challenges, and develop strategies for effective interaction in global ELF contexts.

Fluency refers to relatively effortless and fluid speech, characterized by minimal hesitation, repetition, or pausing; in simpler terms, "fluency relates to smooth turn-taking" (Prodromou, 2009). In the context of multilingual classroom with using English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), fluency involves maintaining smooth continuity in speech while ensuring pragmatic appropriateness of utterances among teachers and learners (Hüttner, 2009). Experts identify three dimensions of fluency relevant to ELF (Segalowitz, 2010), cognitive fluency, which refers to the speed and efficiency of speech production processing. Next, utterance fluency, which includes speed, pausing, and repair. The last one is perceived fluency, which is especially crucial in contexts aiming for natural, spontaneous communication. Furthermore, fluency often proves more beneficial in communication among non-native speakers, particularly as English is not the mother tongue (Prodromou, 2009; Segalowitz, 2010). For instance, in business dealings, non-native speakers tend to prioritize fluency over grammatical accuracy, and in multilingual classrooms, focusing on fluency can enhance comprehension and interactive competence more effectively, even though accuracy remains important when achieved (Bohara, 2025).

Comprehension of EFL in the multilingual classrooms reveals that is increasingly understood not just as the ability to decode English, but as the capacity to make meaning by drawing on a student's entire linguistic repertoire (Bano, 2017). In EFL speaking comprehension, teachers should follow basic principles, including speaking slowly, using

alternative words to enhance student understanding, motivating students toward learning objectives, maintaining consistent topics across activities, applying appropriate teaching methods, selecting suitable materials, and incorporating authentic resources. Moreover, comprehension development is crucial as students with well-developed skills participate more effectively in communication (Rokhaniyah et al., 2024). In multilingual EFL classrooms, there has been a shift from focusing on native speaker norms to appropriateness and intelligibility, emphasizing linguistic features and communication understanding that facilitate cross-cultural communication (Pitkänen-Huhta & Mäntylä, 2021). Its need is for promoting teacher and learner competencies to respond to classroom diversity (Bano, 2017). So, the key to comprehension shows the result in communication of EFL in multilingual classrooms, the understanding and spontaneous interaction in conversation.

Accent diversity of EFL in multilingual classroom reveals evolving perspectives toward linguistic inclusivity. In ethnically diverse environment, EFL teachers demonstrate high sensitivity to linguistic diversity and favor diverse accents in teaching materials over inner-circle English models, though non-native speaker teachers show stronger orientation toward British English (Sung, 2016). Teachers navigate complex tensions between cultural identity and professional expectations, ultimately adapting their pedagogical practices to incorporate diverse Englishes in multilingual classrooms (Ligoyligoy, 2025). Multicultural classroom is emphasized the need for EFL teachers to accommodate linguistic diversity through practices including welcoming diversity, multimodal input, and differentiating instruction to support multilingual development (Alshraah et al., 2024). Cavalheiro et al., (2022) indicated a shift from correctness to appropriateness and intelligibility, moving away from native speaker norms toward communication strategies that facilitate cross-cultural communication, highlighting the need for enhanced teacher and learner competences in multilingual EFL classrooms.

Pedagogical Principles on English as a Lingua Franca in Multilingual Classrooms

In multilingual classrooms, effective language teaching requires more than mastery of grammar and vocabulary; it demands pedagogical principles that embrace learners' diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. The pedagogical principles such as error tolerance, cultural awareness, flexible linguistic norms, and cultural sensitivity fosters inclusive learning environments, promote intercultural competence, and enhance

communicative effectiveness (Lightbown & Spada, 2021). In contexts where English serves as a Lingua Franca (ELF), these principles enable learners to engage meaningfully, negotiate meaning, and reflect on their own and others' cultural assumptions, positioning linguistic and cultural diversity as valuable resources rather than obstacles (Jenkins, 2013).

The first principle, error tolerance, refers to the pedagogical principle viewing language errors not as failures to be eliminated, but as natural and valuable parts of the language acquisition process. It involves creating an inclusive and supportive environment where students feel comfortable making mistakes, which is crucial for their learning and willingness to communicate (Al-Garaady & Albuhairy, 2023). In multilingual classroom, tolerating errors fosters a safe and supportive environment that encourages risk-taking, experimentation, and negotiation of meaning, skills essential for communication in English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) context (Guerra et al., 2019). Moreover, adopting an error-tolerant pedagogy reduces learners' anxiety, enhances participation, and affirms linguistic diversity, ultimately shifting the focus from linguistic perfection to communicative effectiveness (Kramsch, 1993). Thus, error tolerance not only supports language acquisition but also cultivates intercultural awareness and inclusivity in multicultural classrooms.

Cultural awareness is fundamental to effective teaching and learning in multicultural classrooms. Cultural awareness is an essential component of language education, extending beyond linguistic mastery to encompass the ability to navigate cultural diversity and engage in meaningful intercultural interactions (Deardorff, 2006). Developing cultural awareness involves more than knowledge of cultural facts, it requires sensitivity to how culture influences communication, learning styles, and classroom interaction (Byram, 2020). In multilingual classrooms, cultural awareness fosters mutual respect and reduces the potential for misunderstanding, thereby creating an inclusive learning environment (Kramsch, 1993). It also encourages learners to reflect on their own cultural assumptions while developing openness toward difference, a skill that is increasingly vital in English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) communication (Canagarajah, 2013; Junnier, 2024). Thus, integrating cultural awareness into pedagogy not only enhances intercultural competence but also supports equitable participation and deeper learning in diverse classrooms.

Flexible linguistic norms mean shifting away from rigid, monolingual standards and embracing students' full linguistic repertoires as a resource for learning. Instead of enforcing rigid adherence to standardized English, teachers who adopt flexible norms

acknowledge the legitimacy of varied language practices, including translanguaging and code-switching, as valuable tools for meaning-making (Canagarajah, 2013; Przymus 2024). Such an approach reflects the reality of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), where intelligibility, accommodation, and negotiation of meaning take precedence over native-speaker accuracy (Guerra et al., 2019; Jenkins, 2013). By promoting flexible norms, teachers not only validate learners' multilingual repertoires but also foster inclusivity and reduce linguistic hierarchies that can marginalize non-native speakers (Junnier, 2024). This pedagogical stance transforms the classroom into a space where linguistic diversity is seen as a resource rather than an obstacle, ultimately enhancing both equity and communicative effectiveness (Pennycook, 2004).

Cultural sensitivity involves the awareness, knowledge, empathy, and respect for the diverse cultural backgrounds, experiences, and identities of students, enabling teachers and learners to recognize and respect differences in cultural values, communication styles, and learning preferences (Mantiri, 2013; Wang, 2024). Teachers who demonstrate cultural sensitivity are better equipped to create inclusive learning environments that accommodate the diverse backgrounds of students, reducing misunderstandings and fostering mutual respect (Banks, 2015; Gay, 2010). In the context of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), cultural sensitivity supports effective intercultural communication by encouraging students to adapt their language use while appreciating others' cultural perspectives (Canagarajah, 2013; Guerra et al., 2019). It also promotes reflective practices, where both teachers and learners examine their assumptions and biases, contributing to more equitable classroom dynamics (Byram, 2020). Integrating cultural sensitivity into pedagogy not only enhances learners' communicative competence but also cultivates social and intercultural skills essential for navigating multilingual and multicultural contexts (Deardorff, 2006)

Pedagogical Approaches to ELF in Multilingual Classrooms

Practically, the success of these pedagogical principles hinges on engaging learners in authentic ELF communicative experiences, which need specific approaches. Task-Based Learning (TBL) is employed to design activities that require collaborative efforts toward achieving specific goals, promoting natural English communication (Jeon & Hahn, 2006). Content-Based Instruction (CBI) is integrating subject matter from disciplines such as history or culture into language learning (Dalton-Puffer, 2011). Real-World Learning (RWL) is particularly valuable because it reflects the way English is commonly used as a medium for intercultural collaboration, workplace communication,

and global networking (Heinzmann et al., 2024). Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) prioritizes meaningful interaction over rote learning, encouraging authentic language use (Fatima et al., 2024). Furthermore, these approaches encourage student-driven questioning, exploration of topics, and active participation in discussions, facilitating genuine language engagement (Chaika, 2023).

Task-Based Learning (TBL) emphasizes the use of meaningful tasks as the core of language learning, engaging learners in authentic activities such as planning a trip, conducting an interview, or solving a problem (Burdujan, 2024). This approach moves away from a primary focus on grammar instruction or vocabulary lists, instead fostering collaboration and communication among learners, which allows them to use English in natural and purposeful ways (Bryfonski, 2024; Lopriore, 2024). By completing these tasks, students develop fluency, and strategies for negotiating meaning, which are key elements of successful English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) communication (Junnier, 2024; Taglialatela, 2024). In multicultural classrooms, TBL not only enhances linguistic competence but also prepares learners to effectively interact with students from diverse linguistic backgrounds, thus promoting a more inclusive understanding of English in global contexts (Chaika, 2023; Lestari & Margana, 2024).

Content-Based Instruction (CBI) integrates subject matter from disciplines such as history and culture into language learning, treating English not only as a subject to be studied but also as a tool for accessing knowledge and engaging with content in various academic or professional fields (Dalton-Puffer, 2011). Makarova & Merrill (2025) mentioned CBI, learners acquire both linguistic competence and subject knowledge simultaneously, which is particularly beneficial in English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) contexts (Arulselvi, 2016; Sulaiman & Sakkir, 2025). This approach mirrors how English is widely used as a medium of instruction and professional exchange in globalized environments, preparing students for real-world applications of language use (Jenkins, 2013; Salam & Luksfinanto, 2024). In multicultural classroom is emphasizing the integration of language and content, CBI fosters a more meaningful learning experience, enhancing students' ability to communicate effectively in diverse contexts (Roodsari & Harrison, 2024; Sifakis et al., 2018).

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) places communication and interaction at the center of language learning, emphasizing the importance of authentic language use over rote memorization of grammar rules (Qasserras, 2023). In CLT, learners engage in role-plays, group discussions, debates, and other interactive tasks that foster fluency

and mutual understanding, with errors viewed as a natural part of the learning process (Fatima et al., 2024). This approach is particularly relevant in English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), and focusing on the ability to adapt language to various contexts, CLT in multicultural classroom helps learners build confidence in expressing their ideas clearly across diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds (Lopriore, 2024). Salam & Luksfinanto (2024) indicated that CLT enhance communicative competence among learners, enabling them to navigate real-world interactions more effectively. Furthermore, the emphasis on communicative strategies within CLT aligns with the needs of ELF speakers, who often negotiate meaning and co-construct understanding in multilingual classroom (Lestari & Margana, 2024). Overall, CLT not only promotes language proficiency but also prepares learners for the complexities of global communication (Guerra et al., 2019).

Real-World Learning (RWL) emphasizes the integration of authentic experiences and practical applications into language education, particularly in English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) context (Conti & Dawson, 2022). This approach positions English not just as an academic subject but as a functional tool for engaging in real-life tasks, such as community projects, presentations, and service-learning activities (Heinzmann, 2024). By connecting classroom instruction with meaningful contexts, learners develop both linguistic skills and practical competencies that extend beyond the classroom into their personal, academic, and professional lives (Al-Asmari & Khan, 2014). In ELF contexts, RWL is especially valuable as it reflects how English is commonly used for intercultural collaboration and workplace communication (Chung, 2023). This prepares learners to navigate diverse linguistic environments with confidence and adaptability, focusing on effective communication rather than linguistic perfection. Yao et al., (2019) illustrated that students in multicultural classroom often prioritize mutual intelligibility and practical engagement, which enhances their ability to interact successfully in global networks and diverse communities. In classroom where diversities studying foster an environment that values real-world applications, educators can better equip students for the challenges of a globalized world, promoting not only language proficiency but also intercultural competence and collaboration skills (Jenkins, 2013).
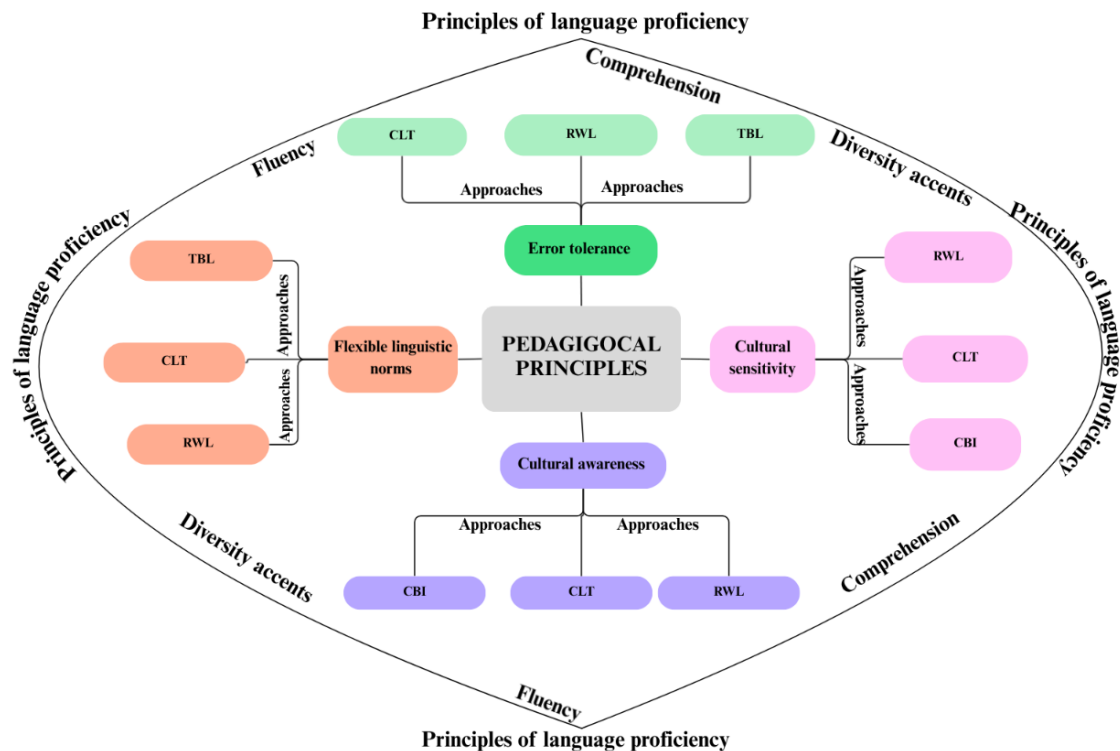
Body of knowledge

Figure 1: The Principles and Pedagogical Principles of ELF

The figure shows that teaching on ELF in multilingual classrooms, the focus shifts from native-like norm to appropriateness and intelligibility. In the context of multilingual classroom, teachers need to possess the principles of language proficiency which included comprehension, accent diversity, and fluency. The comprehension emphasizes understanding meaning through different speakers with various accents. Accents diversity intelligibility over native accents, encouraging learners to speak clearly and be understood rather than mimic native speakers. Fluency highlights the ability to express ideas smoothly and confidently, even with minor errors, promoting real-world communication over grammatical precision. Together, these principles of language proficiency support approaches including Task-Based Learning (TBL), Content-Based Instruction (CBI), World Learning (RWL), and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). Furthermore, the strategies are able to apply the pedagogical approaches which include error tolerance, cultural awareness, flexible linguistic norm, and cultural sensitivity.

In the figure also shows that a multicultural classroom is able to apply error tolerance by integrating CLT, RWL, and TBL in approach. As well as, the application of cultural awareness can be conducted by using CBI, CLT, and RWL. In addition, to apply the principle of flexible linguistic norm teachers have to integrate TBL, CLT, and RWL approach. For the approach RWL, CLT, and CBI are able to apply cultural sensitivity. Thus, in teaching ELF in multicultural classroom, teacher should not only possess the principles of language proficiency but also pedagogical principles as well as the correct approaches in integrating.

Conclusion

This study examined the principles and pedagogical principles of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) within multilingual classrooms, underscoring its role as a dynamic resource for fostering communication and inclusivity. Three key principles of language proficiency, including fluency, comprehension, and accent diversity, were identified as central to enabling learners to navigate linguistic differences and achieve mutual intelligibility without reliance on native-speaker norms. These principles collectively shift the focus from grammatical precision to communicative effectiveness, preparing learners for authentic interaction in global contexts.

Equally important, the pedagogical principles of error tolerance, cultural awareness, flexible linguistic norms, and cultural sensitivity offered a framework for inclusive practice. By recognizing errors as natural stages of language development, validating multilingual repertoires, and cultivating intercultural respect, these principles repositioned ELF as a tool for equity rather than exclusion. The teaching approaches of Task-Based Learning (TBL), Content-Based Instruction (CBI), Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), and Real-World Learning (RWL) further operationalized these principles, ensuring that classroom practices aligned with the communicative realities of diverse learners.

The findings pointed to the need for continued professional development that equips teachers to integrate these principles and pedagogical principles effectively. Teacher training emphasized the language proficiency and pedagogical principles, which align with intercultural competence and adaptability, enabling educators to design instruction that is responsive to both linguistic and cultural diversity. Moreover, further papers should investigate how these principles and pedagogies manifested across different educational levels, contexts, and disciplines, providing deeper insights into the practical challenges and successes of ELF in multilingual classrooms.

Ultimately, reframing English language teaching through the lens of ELF highlighted the necessity of moving beyond native-speaker norms toward more inclusive, flexible, and context-sensitive practices. In doing so, multilingual classrooms could become spaces not only for language acquisition but also for intercultural dialogue, mutual understanding, and preparation for global citizenship.

Suggestions

1. The principle must emphasize clear communication rather than strict adherence to native English norms. The goal is effective communication, which can be achieved even if students have different accents or use non-standard grammar.

2. Modern times must use technology to support ELF learning, such as language learning apps, online discussion forums, and virtual exchange programs with speakers of different Englishes. This can provide students with additional practice and exposure to ELF contexts.

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