Conceptual Transition from English as a Foreign Language to BELF[*]

Yabancı Dil Olarak İngilizce'den Ortak Dil Olarak İş İngilizce'sine Kavramsal Geçiş

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ABSTRACT: Business professionals, who use English language in their daily interactions at global corporate companies in Turkey, have been educated within the paradigm of teaching and learning of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). However, as most of their interactions in business world take place with speakers of other languages in multilingual/cultural settings, these professionals' use of English language as Lingua Franca (ELF) may commence to function in different domains with different purposes and communicative outcomes within the paradigm of BELF. However, to our best knowledge, how business professionals in Turkey use and conceptualize English language in their daily business domains and how they position themselves as users of English and BELF have not been investigated. With this aim in mind, we conducted a research with 19 business professionals working at global companies in Istanbul. The data was collected through a survey administered with 19 business professionals and semi- structured interviews with five informants working in top positions at those companies which serve global customers. The findings of the study revealed that business professionals in Turkey are in a state of flux between the two paradigms – i.e., EFL and ELF toward the construction of BELF because EFL and ELF co-exist in their minds.
Keywords: BELF, ELF, EFL, business professionals

ÖZ: Türkiye'deki uluslararası kurumsal şirketlerde İngilizceyi günlük etkileşimlerinde kullanan iş insanları Yabancı Dil olarak İngilizceyi (YDİ) öğrenme ve öğretme yaklaşımı çerçevesinde eğitilmişlerdir. Ama iş dünyasındaki etkileşimlerinin çoğunluğu çok dilli/ kültürlü ortamda diğer dillerin konuşanlarıyla gerçekleştiği için bu iş insanlarının Ortak Dil olarak İngilizce (ODİ) kullanması Ortak Dil olarak İş İngilizcesi (ODİİ) yaklaşımı içinde farklı alanlarda, farklı amaçlarla ve iletişimsel sonuçlarıyla çalışmaya başlar. Bununla beraber Türkiye'deki iş insanlarının günlük iş ortamlarında İngilizceyi nasıl kullandığı ve kavramsallaştırdıkları ve kendilerini İngilizce ve (ODİİ) kullanıcıları olarak nasıl konumlandırdıkları henüz sistematik olarak araştırılmamıştır. Bu amaçla İstanbul'daki uluslararası şirketlerde çalışan 19 iş insanı ile bir araştırma yürüttük. Araştırma verileri 19 iş insanına özgeçmiş anketi verilerek ve küresel müşterilere hizmet eden şirketlerde en iyi pozisyonlarda çalışan 5 katılımcı ile yarı-yapılandırılmış görüşmeler yapılarak toplanmıştır. Çalışmanın sonuçları Türkiye'deki iş insanlarının algılarında YDİ

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ve ODİ'nin bir arada var olduğu için iki yaklaşımın yani YDİ ve ODİ'den ODİİ'ye doğru yorumlama arasında etkileşim içinde oldukları ortaya koymuştur.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Yabancı dil olarak İngilizce (YDİ), Ortak dil olarak İngilizce (ODİ), Ortak dil olarak iş İngilizcesi (ODİİ), iş insanları

1. INTRODUCTION

It is difficult to define and conceptualize the English language that is used in global business contexts as the interlocutors participating in multinational business discourses can be speakers of English as a first, second or foreign language who also concurrently use other languages in their daily business acts and interactions (Nickerson, 2005). English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) provides an encompassing definition for the English used in global workspaces because ELF entails both second/foreign and native speakers of English as its interlocutors and fits the nature of global workspace as the resource of ELF is "inherently fluid and flexible, deeply multicultural and multilingual, and highly context-bound, negotiable *in-situ*" (Kankaanranta et al., 2015, p. 128). For majority of ELF researchers, ELF in that sense is an "additionally acquired language system" and "distinct" from the English language used by its native speakers, and thus "must be learnt" or "additionally acquired" also by native speakers of English (Jenkins et al. 2011; Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2013). Moreover, ELF communication is idiosyncratic because the "communicative strategies" used by its users are far removed from approximating or conforming to any pre-set or defined language norms (Seidlhofer & Widdowson, 2009). In order to provide a more definitive framework for ELF, Jenkins et al. (2011) compare ELF with English as a foreign language (EFL). EFL is a component of Modern (Foreign) Languages paradigm, and its speakers are non-native speakers of English who take native-speaker varieties as the norm and "benchmark" and consider any other variety deviating from this form as deficiency, code-switching as "knowledge gap", and they are speakers of English trying to attain native-like competence (p. 283-284). ELF, on the other hand, is the concept of Global Englishes paradigm, again in which majority of its speakers are non-native speakers of English who are "accepted in their own right", acknowledge all varieties of English, and consider bilingualism as a "pragmatic source" (p. 283-284).

Noticing the idiosyncrasy of the English language used particularly in business contexts and introducing the concept of BELF, Kankaanranta and Louhiala-Salminen are ground breakers in the field. Adding the initial B (i.e., business) to ELF (BELF) makes the type of discourse more distinctive, context-sensitive and context-specific in the sense that the term underscores "the overall goal and the domain of use of the language of business professionals operating internationally" (Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2010, p.205). The following definition; therefore, provides a lucid definition and conceptualization of the English language that is employed by these business professionals in global workspaces:

> BELF refers to English used as a 'neutral' and shared communication code. BELF is neutral in the sense that none of the speakers can claim it as her/his mother tongue; it is shared in the sense that it is used for conducting business within the global business discourse community, whose members are BELF users and communicators in their own right – not 'non-native speakers' or 'learners'. (Louhiala-Salminen et al., 2005: 403–4).

Attaining a desired/required level of language proficiency in English is significant for operating successfully in the global business world, and undoubtedly one needs to exhibit certain degree of competence in his/her business know-how in extremely competitive world of business. However, today, integrating the language proficiency with "communicative know-how" and with "business know-how" – including the knowledge of particular business contexts and how they function along with particular genres and jargons, and overall business strategies – has become more important (Kankaanranta & Louhiala- Salminen, 2010). Thus, no matter what roles they take on, what kind of jobs they do, which discourses they participate in, and

what kind of genres they use to communicate their messages and to "get their work done", it is important to gain competence in BELF for business professionals by integrating BELF with their inherent native business frameworks and discursive practices along with their expertise, business know-how, and general and disciplinary- specific language knowledge (Kankaanranta & Louhiala- Salminen, 2010, p. 205).

We do maintain that BELF is important for business professionals operating globally. However, we also contend to the idea that one needs to conceptualize and internalize any novel situation or understanding in his/her own terms before putting this successfully into practice. Business professionals working internationally undoubtedly use BELF in their everyday practices, but for many business professionals in EFL contexts, the English language they use is highly likely to be conceptualized without B – L and F. In accordance with Seidlhofer's (2001) notion of "conceptual gap", conceptualization of the English language for users of English in EFL contexts, such as Turkey, is unsurprisingly still associated with native speaker norms (also see Table 1 for EFL and BELF approaches in Kankaanranta & Louhiala- Salminen, 2013, p. 29). The inherent associations of business professionals' conceptualizations of the language they use with their business partners is important (Jenkins et al., 2011) because this determines the degree they could benefit from the certain advantages that BELF could bring to their daily business interactions. With these caveats in mind, in an effort to contribute to relatively few empirical studies mainly conducted in Nordic countries on BELF, our study aimed to investigate how business professionals in Turkey use and conceptualize English language in their daily business domains and how they position themselves as users of English and BELF.

1.1. Previous Research on Perceptions and Uses of BELF

In their 2005 study, also known as the merger project (2013), Louhiala-Salminen, Charles and Kankaanranta compared Finnish and Swedish business professionals' language use and communication practices by administering a questionnaire and examining their emails and meetings. Despite some shared and unshared communication styles and strategies – shaped by culture-influenced expectations and perceptions – English language was found to be the unifying language source between the two parties. Charles (2007) also found that the use of English, and particularly BELF, curtailed language-based power relations between the same group of speakers (p. 274). Kankaanranta and Louhiala-Salminen (2010) explored BELF users' perceptions about English by conducting an online survey with 987 and interviews with 15 business professionals working in Finland-based companies, and with document analyses. The main findings of the study indicated that (1) respondents used both their mother tongue and English in their daily business interactions, (2) despite some instances respondents generally felt equally at ease in their communications both with native speakers (NSs) and non-native speakers (NNSs), (3) within BELF communication the ultimate goal of the respondents was "getting the job done", (4) respondents held a pragmatic understanding of language proficiency level that for many of them knowledge of field-specific genres and conveying the message across clearly and accurately were more important than linguistic accuracy, and (5) English was "simply work" (p. 207).

Kankaanranta and Planken (2010) also explored perceptions about BELF communication and its perceived relatedness to success in global business environments by reporting the findings of the selected data sets collected from 987 survey and 27 interview respondents. They documented a very detailed analysis of how BELF is perceived by its users. Most of their findings correspond to the findings of the aforementioned 2010 study. Although some respondents perceived conversations with NSs to be more natural in flow and some felt intimidated in conversing with NSs, the majority perceived English in BELF communication free of any Inner Circle variety or native-speaker norms, and considered NNSs as "equal communication partners" (p. 389). The characteristics of BELF English was depicted as being

"simplified English" which is used to "get the job done" and build rapport with business partners by employing "specific technical jargon" and "mastery of genres" toward attaining the ultimate goal of "clarity" in communication (p. 392-94). For the respondents, BELF competence could only be gained in real business life through prolonged engagement in "shared BELF business domain", gaining more expertise in the field by internalizing and familiarizing oneself with specific concepts and terminologies of the "discourse-community", and by communicating with particular business partners on an extended course of time (p. 391). Kankaanranta and Planken (2010) concluded that success of BELF communication was determined by accomplishing the required tasks – getting the work done, "making the discourse clear" for both parties – clarity, and "making the recipient feel good" – building rapport with business partners (p. 396).

Ehrenreich (2010) conducted an ethnographic research with upper members of a family owned, German multinational company of technology to investigate their perceptions about the role of English in their company. Her findings indicated that English was a "must" and recruitment criterion among all members of the company from top-management to all levels of employees. Standard forms of English were considered as a requirement and matter of prestige particularly for public (web-based) texts; however, similar to Louhiala-Salminen et al. (2005), communicating the intended meaning across the business partners and "getting the job done" were the primary criteria, and no native-like competency was sought after. While the role of English was regarded as a principal "facilitator" to start and conduct business in international market, the German language or any other linguistic resources were valued at the same level for successful business communication.

1.2. The Role of English and ELF Research in Turkey

Turkey represents an Expanding Circle country in accordance with Kachru's (1992) Three Concentric Circles because in Turkey English is learnt, taught and used as a foreign language with no attributions to any institutional purpose or official status unlike Outer Circle countries. However, denoting the top down promotion of English by the government/ The Ministry of National Education (MONE) and the number of educational institutions where English is used as medium of instruction, Doğançay-Aktuna and Kızıltepe (2005) and Selvi (2011) liken the significance attached to the teaching and learning of English in Turkey to that of Outer Circle countries. Foreign language, as a concept, has had different representations for the society in Turkey. The need for learning a foreign language has altered motives and domains with regard to changing socio-economic, political, and cultural conditions of the country, and the respective era. Considering the indivisible link between language and power, different foreign languages have gained importance and popularity in Turkey depending on the socio-political climate of the period. For instance, while from 1923 to 1950's the French language was the popular and promoted foreign language to be taught and learnt in schools in Turkey – which is followed by English, German and Arabic respectively, after the 1950's English became the predominant foreign language taught and learnt in schools and other foreign language teaching institutions (Selvi, 2011, p. 186). In 1980's due to the neo-liberal movements of free market economy in Turkey and English becoming the language of popular and mass culture – which has largely been dominated by the United States, English language gained more popularity (Kırkgöz, 2005).

In line with these socio-political turnabouts "the Turkish national education system has constantly reshaped its language policy and repositioned the study of English" (Inal & Özdemir, 2015, p. 135), and spread of English in Turkey has become inevitable. In the 1990's, private schools and Anatolian (state) High Schools – where students after having completed one-year of preparatory English continued their secondary (3 years) and high school education (3 years) based on a full immersion system – became highly popular especially in metropolitan cities in

Turkey. Parents considered these schools to be the guarantee of high quality education and better future prospects for their children. These schools, particularly private schools, at the prevailing time highly valued native speaker teachers of English. The number of recruited native speaker teachers determined and identified the perceived success and popularity of these schools. This perception is what we refer to as teaching and learning English in the EFL paradigm in this paper. The business professionals operating in global companies today, who are aged between 30- 45, have mostly been educated within this system. EFL paradigm signifies the system of teaching and learning of English "where the native-speaker is the yardstick and whose language competence is sought after" (Kankaanranta et al., 2015, p. 138).

The reforms that took place in foreign language policy and planning of MONE in 1997, 2005 and 2012 sought to offer equal opportunities and to standardize the amount of foreign language instruction in all types of schools (see Kırkgöz, 2007, 2017) and put emphasis on communicative and student-centered learning approaches along with the acknowledgement of the current status of ELF (MONE 2006). The Higher Council of Education also endorses integrating current discussions available in ELF and World Englishes research into a variety of courses in pre-service teacher education courses in ELT programs (İnal & Özdemir, 2015). Although each reform aimed at revising the shortcomings of the former one, it was observed that goals were not attained due to "insufficient teaching time allocated for each grade, large class sizes, and inadequate resources" (Kırkgöz, 2017, p. 28) and teachers' reliance on traditional approaches and allotting less room for developing communicative skills in language classrooms in state schools (Haznedar, 2012; Kırkgöz, 2017). Similarly, the studies on perceptions of pre-service, in-service and faculty members about ELF reveal that, compared to pre-service teachers who are familiarized with ELF paradigm through academic instruction in revised ELT programs, in-service teachers and faculty members hold pro-EFL approaches for diverse reasons – though are potentially subject to change (İnal & Özdemir, 2015). Therefore, we can infer that though ELF is widely acknowledged, EFL paradigm is still prevalent among education stakeholders in Turkey. Today the number of affordable private schools is increasing every year, and given the circumstances in state schools, many parents want their children to be educated in these private schools for better foreign language education. And if private schools recruit native speaker teachers, this is considered as a supplementary asset of these schools despite taking into account those teachers' level and quality of certification. EFL paradigm is so prevalent in Turkey that in 2011, the government and MONE launched "Turkey to Hire" project which aimed to recruit 40000 native speaker teachers to work collaboratively with local EFL teachers in schools (see Coşkun, 2013).

ELF research in Turkey has so far investigated the conceptualization and use of ELF from perspectives of in-service English language teachers (Bayyurt & Sifakis, 2015; İnceçay & Akyel, 2014; Karakaya & Hatipoğlu, 2017; Sifakis & Bayyurt, 2015), pre-service teachers and faculty members in ELT programs (İnal & Özdemir, 2015; Kaçar & Bayyurt, 2018; Kemaloglu-Er & Bayyurt, 2016; Öztürk, Altınmakas & Çeçen, 2009), and students (Kaypak & Ortaçtepe, 2014). To best of our knowledge, only Akar (2002) conducted a large-scale study on the use of English by business professionals in Turkey, but not from the perspective of BELF. Akar (2002) investigated the influence of macro contextual factors – i.e., national and regional culture – on the form and function of 450 texts of internal and external correspondence produced both in Turkish and English in four different corporate companies. She found Turkish business professionals were remarkably influenced by conventional state- related bureaucratic language in producing their internal and external correspondences both in Turkish and English in similar ways. The reflected characteristics of bureaucratic writing were the use of formulaic expressions, indirectness, avoiding personal involvement, making requests by using necessity statements, performative statements, and imperative (particularly in English) and by employing negative face-saving strategies. Nevertheless, how business professionals position themselves as

users of English and users of BELF, or how they conceptualize English language and their use of English in their daily business domains have not so far been investigated in Turkey.

Within the current understanding of ELF, similar to Kankaanranta et al. (2015) and Jenkins et al. (2011), Seidlhofer (2011) pointed at the conceptual dichotomy between EFL and ELF approaches. In line with this argument, it is important to dig out how English language is conceptualized and used in a setting like Turkey where the dichotomy between EFL and ELF is becoming a major feature as discussed above. For instance, having been taught in EFL paradigm, business professionals in Turkey can be expected to "defer to NS norms of using the language" through "imitation" and "adoption" with an objective of "integration, membership in NS community" at the beginning of their socialization into global business world (Seidlhofer, 2011, p. 18). However, as most of these professionals' interaction in business world takes place with speakers of other languages in multilingual/cultural settings, we anticipated that EFL-oriented business professionals might experience and demonstrate a conceptual transition from EFL to BELF, and prioritize intelligibility and successful communication with their NS or NNS colleagues by accommodating their existing language repertoires to the requirements of the respective business context. With this impetus, in this study, we aimed to explore how BELF is conceptualized and employed by its actual and immediate users and to provide implications for language teachers particularly teaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses at universities.

2. METHOD

The study was conducted with 19 business professionals working at global companies – i.e., advertising agency, insurance company, and fashion industry in Istanbul. They were selected through convenience sampling. The key demographic information about our informants can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1: Key demographics of informants

	Informants	
Demographics	Survey Respondents	Interviews
Total	19	5
Female	5	2
Male	14	3
<35 years of age	7	4
University Degree	19	5
Graduate Degree	6	5
Work Experience	<17	6-15

All our informants learnt English at school and received formal English language instruction for 4 (minimum) to 15 (maximum) years. Those who had received minimum years of English language instruction learnt German or French as a foreign language and English as second foreign language at school. Among our informants only two of them had experience of study abroad. Our informants' work experiences in international companies range from 1 year to 17 years. Among our 5 interview informants, 3 of them worked at a global advertising agency – two of them in the position of strategic planner and one in the position of creative group head/ copywriter. The remaining 2 worked at a global media planning company as group heads for particular global brands. All of our interview informants held graduate degrees and none of them had the experience of studying or working abroad. Among our 5 informants 2 of them learned French as a foreign language during school, and English was the second foreign language (5 years of English instruction). These two informants also received their BA degrees from a French-medium university in Turkey, but completed their graduate degrees in English-medium programs. The other 3 informants graduated from Anatolian High Schools where they had received English language instruction for seven years and continued their undergraduate

and graduate degrees at Turkish-medium universities, and one of them studied at an English-medium university for both degrees. Two of our interview informants had been working at global companies for 6 years, one for 7, one for 12, and the other one for 15 years.

Similar to the methodology adapted in previous studies available in the literature, we conducted a survey and interviews to gain a deeper understanding of the English they use at the workplace during the data collection. At the initial stage of our data collection, we administered a survey with 19 informants by sending them the survey via e-mail. The survey examined informants' attitudes toward the role and importance of English in business life, their perceptions about their use of English in various domains, particularly in their professions, and their certain preferences in use of English (i.e., phonological, syntactical and lexical choices, accuracy, fluency, and intelligibility) while communicating with their business partners in international contexts. The survey prepared in Turkish was composed of five main parts: (A) why informants thought English was important for their professional lives, (B) how competence in English contributed to informants' professional success, (C) what informants thought about their oral and written use of English and what they found as important in their communications with foreign partners, (D) which variety of English informants perceived as the standard English, and (E) personal demographic information. For Part A, informants were asked to evaluate and rate their opinions in given statements on a five point Likert-scale according to importance – *from very important* to *not important at all*. For parts B and C, informants rated the given sentences on a five point Likert-scale in accordance with their agreements and disagreements ranging from – *I absolutely agree to I absolutely disagree.* In part C of the survey, informants were asked to choose among the given varieties of English to indicate their preference over the standard English, and the options were: British English, American English, any variety of English used in contexts where English holds the status of being the native language (i.e., all Inner Circle varieties), and English as an international language.

In the second stage of our data collection, we conducted semi-structured interviews with 5 volunteered informants working at a global advertising agency and a media planning company. We designed some of our semi-structured interview questions based on the responses these five informants provided in the survey; our aim here was to gain deeper insights about informants' perceptions, evaluations, and experiences, and to explore the extent and nature of conceptual transition from ELF to BELF, if any. The interview questions further investigated the following: (a) informants' views about the similarities and differences between the English they were taught in their educational histories and the English they used in actual business life, (b) their perceptions about the linguistic and pragmatic competencies required in daily communications of the global business world, (c) observed and/or experienced changes in their use of English correlated with the experiences they gained in their professions over the course of time, and (d) the communication strategies, if any, the informants employed for successful business – to get things done.

To ensure ethical integrity we received the informed consent of each of our informants prior to conducting the interviews. Each interview took approximately 30 minutes, and we conducted the interviews face- to-face in our informants' own working environments and in Turkish to make participants feel at ease in their retrospective reflections and responses. Audio-recorded and verbatim-transcribed data sets were analysed by employing thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Following the complete analysis of all data sets, four researchers agreed on three themes (i.e., roles of English in business world, perceptions of English used at the workplace, and conceptual transition) to be discussed as the main findings of the study. We will refer to our informants as Informant (I) 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 when we present excerpts from our interview data sets in the Findings and Discussion section of the paper. The trustworthiness of the study was maintained by employing methodological triangulation (i.e., by using multiple sources of data collection to cross-check our inferences from the data sets), investigator

triangulation (i.e., different interviewers conducted each interviews with the informants), and by using peer-review in our analysis and interpretation of the interview data sets. We analysed the findings derived from the background questionnaire by creating frequency distributions of participants' responses. The two authors of this paper, who are experienced in conducting qualitative research and data analysis, conducted the thematic analysis for the interview data sets. Interview data sets were verbatim transcribed by the researchers, which is considered as the first important step for qualitative researchers to familiarize themselves with the data. To grasp a rigorous understanding of the data, prior to finding the initial codes, both reviewers individually read each interview transcript twice, highlighted salient words, phrases and sentences, took notes, and created a memo for each interview transcript. The two authors identified the main codes (and consequently the themes) upon discussion of the memos and agreed on three themes. In order to maintain reliability, one of the two other authors of this paper analysed two randomly selected interview transcriptions using the final coding scheme, and 80% of agreement was received.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings pertaining to our study will be presented and discussed under three themes: (a) roles of English in business world, (b) business professionals' perceptions of English used at the workplace, and (c) conceptual transition from ELF to BELF.

3.1. Roles of English in Business World

For the majority of business professionals in our study, English serves as an important resource both for their current positions at their workplaces and for prospective career opportunities. At the workplace, knowledge of English enables business professionals to use various means of communication of the Internet and emailing systems with utmost efficiency, to communicate and discuss work-related issues, and to establish effective communication with foreign visitors and international business partners. Competence in English also contributes to their professional development as it enables them to attend conferences, seminars and trainings related to their field both in Turkey and abroad. From the informants' point of view, English is also considered as key means to expand their opportunities of finding jobs in the international market and abroad, and is related to having the opportunity to live in better standards.

The findings revealed that our informants consider attaining a desired proficiency level of English language both as a passport and gatekeeper at the same time. The former refers to the aforementioned fact that English enables them to gain access to global business world and international market – as a "facilitator" (Ehrenreich, 2010), which also allows them to find well-paid jobs and pursue prestigious career options in their fields. However, at the same time English plays a key role in restricting or increasing their chances of success. It is evident that informants associate desired level of/high level of competence in English to a great extent with success in their professional life. In the first place, English functions as a gatekeeper during the process of being employed or getting the job. And then, this gains a different aspect when employees are trying to prove themselves at the workplace. Most of the informants reported that they could not be successful professionals without English. For them, success is dependent on competence in English because this is what enables them to engage in efficient work-related interactions, to be able to follow meetings, be ahead of their colleagues, and follow up work-related printed media, and gain immediate access to first-hand information without any need for translation as the two excerpts illustrate below:

I1: I hadn't used English that often until I started working here and I had this customer [referring to a global brand]. Now I need to use English all the time because I always communicate in English with our customers. Especially during the presentations, customers can be really challenging with their questions, and at those times I sometimes have hard time even

explaining things in Turkish, and English definitely creates a barrier in such cases. So, to be successful and ready for these challenges, I think I need to improve my English as much as I can.

I4: [...] in our field not knowing English is one of the disadvantages you could have as it means you cannot follow or catch up with things. This means that you follow things through a third party, not from their original sources. I read things from the original sources, and this saves my time.

Similar to the findings of Ehrenreich (2010), in certain circumstances, linguistic and communicative competence outweighs professional qualifications and merits in hiring people for job positions; this matters particularly for people who are at managerial positions. This is exemplified by one of our informants as follows:

I1: I am also the group-head, and if there are people who cannot speak English in my team, this always creates problems. I don't recruit people who cannot speak English, and nobody should in global agencies, I guess. A couple of weeks ago, I received some CVs and when I looked through them I thought I should employ someone who definitely speaks English because I can train them about the job but I cannot teach them English.

Majority of our informants state that English allows them to better anticipate and understand their business partners' motives, perceptions and attitudes, which inevitably contributes to successful and effective business interaction. This is in line with the findings of Kankaanranta and Planken (2010) suggesting that successful BELF communication at work is related to building rapport with the recipients. In their study, rapport-building discourse which was even seen more challenging than communicating business content emerged as a suggested topic to be taught in business English courses.

In accordance with these, it is not surprising that all informants see high levels of English proficiency as major requirement for their work-related positions and their professional fields. In highly competitive global business world where the expectations and stakes are high, our informants seem to be quite confident in relation to their qualifications, expertise about their fields, and their competence in English. Majority of the informants reported that they could comfortably express their ideas and conduct their daily businesses in both oral and written English.

3.2. Business Professionals' Perceptions of English Used at the Workplace

The fact that our informants consider themselves as efficient users of English in business life seems to be caused by the fact that their first genuine contact with English and actual use of English started in global business environments. The findings suggest that the majority of the informants started to use English more confidently and with greater awareness once they embarked on their careers. They noted that they had not used English that efficiently and with precise purposes during their educational lives. Our informants explained this as follows:

I5: There is a great difference in terms of how I speak English in meetings and presentations now and how I did two years ago. I have always known that I have the necessary competence but I used to speak with frequent interruptions in the past, and now I speak with more confidence.

I2: As I studied at a private school for 7 years, all my courses were English from Maths to Physics. But the English we had at school was academic; it was more like reading books or writing essays. I started using English in my professional life. At work, we constantly use English to express ourselves such as in presentations.

In their daily business engagements, our informants regard rich vocabulary, especially competence in business-related jargon, as vital to communicate successfully with their foreign

business partners. Acquiring the concepts and terminology related to particular discourse community can be considered as the result of prolonged engagement and experience in the field as illustrated by one of our informants:

I5: When I first started working, I was not very competent in marketing and advertising terminologies. So, there were times when I felt myself uncomfortable. But then, I got used to the field.

I2: In business world, there are some terms that we use very often – the terms of our sector. The English we use at work is more based on communication through sector-related terms.

In addition to the emphasized importance regarding business-related jargon, majority of our informants reported that they consider linguistic accuracy of little significance as they attribute more importance to communicating the message across than producing grammatically correct sentences. They highlighted that clarity of the content while communicating with business partners is essential because miscommunication or misunderstanding would not originate from linguistic inaccuracy but from a lack of negotiation of meaning. Here, we can observe that there is an emphasis on "intelligibility in the broad sense" as put forward by Smith and Nelson (2006). That is, successful communication and mutual intelligibility is dependent on intelligibility (i.e., word/utterance recognition), comprehensibility (i.e., word/utterance meaning), and interpretability (i.e., meaning behind the word utterance). We inferred that this intelligibility in the broad sense is also achieved through the use of field related jargon. Our informants clarified this as follows:

I4: Broken English does not cause miscommunication because people can express basic things. For example, marketing people have mutual understanding of the jargons that we use. I mean as long as the necessary and related persons communicate with each other, things such as grammar and pronunciation are not that important. How you speak or the language is not that important here, we have deadlines and we stay up late till morning, so you should 'get the job done'!

I1: There are around 50 words belonging to marketing or advertising sectors. And I already know them; I think I can express myself as I can generate sentences with the help of those words. Can other people understand me? Yes, they do. Can I understand them? Yes. This is important to me.

Overall, similar to Kankaanranta and Planken (2010), in their BELF communication, our informants prioritize "the need for clarity- rather than correctness- in communication" (p.390). This finding suggests that for our informants "getting the job done" is the perceived success factor in business communication rather than grammatical correctness. All these characteristics depicted by our informants correspond to the key characteristics governing BELF as defined by Kankaanranta and Planken (2010) and Kankaanranta and Louhiala-Salminen (2013), which are acquiring field-related technical jargon and clarity in communication to "get the job done".

With regard to the linguistic background of their business partners, our informants reported that there is no difference in communicating with NS or NNS in business, as they felt comfortable in both situations. However, some of our informants noted that some NS varieties can be difficult to understand and remarked that they felt much at ease while communicating with NNS as they consider themselves at linguistically equal status. For instance, one of the informants noted:

I3: When the customers and partners I have worked together with so far are in question, I can say that for majority of them English was not their mother tongue. I work with English people too, they have been part of the process, but you know what, it does not make any

difference to have communication with any group. But, again, you can feel more at ease when you speak to people who are not English. It is like you are the same type of fish in the ocean.

We liken this notion to a 'linguistic solidarity' established among the non-native speakers of English in business life. Similar kinds of attitudes of business professionals were also reported in other studies (see Ehrenreich, 2012). Moreover, Seidlhofer (2009) refers to ELF speakers as members of a "community of practice" where they are "mutually engaged" in similar practices of communication and have a "shared repertoire" (p. 238). And, each sector in business world is already considered as a community of practice in its own right and BELF is fundamentally different from the everyday English, context specific, and "inherently tolerant of different varieties" (Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2013, p. 28). This explains why our informants generally see no difference in communicating with native speakers and non-native speakers of English.

3.3. Conceptual Transition from ELF to BELF

In their responses to interview questions, our informants at first demonstrated firm attitudes and perceptions of EFL where they highly valued native-speaker norms and considered native-speaker (i.e., Inner Circle - with particular emphasis on British and American English) varieties of English as the forms of Standard English and approximation.

I1: I consider Standard English as the language which is spoken as a native language. For example, there are Indian partners at the company but I wouldn't consider that English. I cannot understand them very easily. You can understand an English or an American even if they have accents.

I2: I find British English, except London accent, more intelligible. It is clearer. It is important to pronounce the letters more similar to the way they (native speakers) pronounce.

I3: I think Standard English is American English. I think we come from its ecolé. All the films we watch all the music we listen are American. When it is like this, you are closer to that ecolé and the language you hear sounds more accurate.

However, as the following excerpts from interview data sets demonstrate, when these very same informants were asked to further explain their conceptualizations of English language, we observed that participants started to move into a phase where they "deconstructed" their perceptions about English within the paradigm of EFL and "reconstructed" an understanding toward the paradigm of ELF with a particular emphasis on intelligibility. Here, by intelligibility what our informants refer to is not intelligibility in the broad sense, but intelligibility at word/utterance recognition level (Smith & Nelson, 2006).

I1: But I don't have any preference over a specific accent. But I need to understand what is being spoken.

I2: Actually it is important to be intelligible regarding the accent. For example, it is more comfortable to talk to a German or Dutch person because they speak more slowly and clearly since their mother tongue is not also English.

I3: Naturally the people I can communicate most easily are the ones whose mother tongue is not English. They can be slow like you. It can be easier to communicate with people like this. The people I can communicate easily are the ones whose mother tongue is not English.

The critical finding of this study is that informants are in a conceptual transition period where they first deconstruct their EFL-oriented conceptualizations toward reconstructing an ELF orientation due to their contextual realities, and where with prolonged engagement in business contexts they finally reach a synthesis of EFL and BELF (see Figure 1). Based on our

overall interpretation of the findings, we have inferred that both paradigms – EFL and BELF – coexist in the minds of business professionals operating in Turkey.
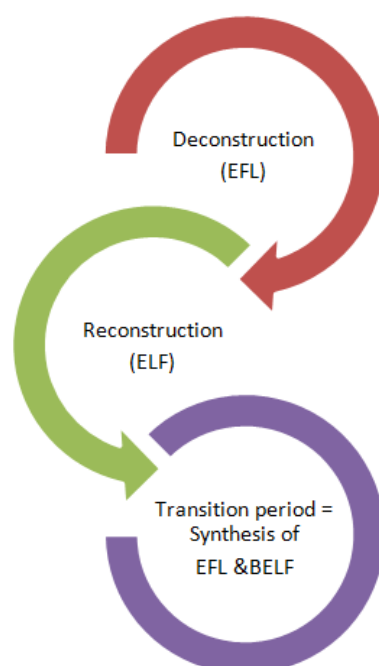
Figure 1. Conceptual transition from EFL to BELF

This finding also echoes what Bayyurt and Sifakis suggested in their colloquium in 2013 ELF Conference held in Rome that in English users' minds, EFL is readily specified and perceptions are already set whereas ELF is not readily specified and perceptions are fluid (see Bayyurt & Sifakis, 2017 for a detailed discussion). This is in line with Charles's interpretation of "conceptual gap" coined by Seidlhofer (2001; 2004). Charles (2007) argues "resulting from the way language seems to be closely tied with its native speakers and their cultural backgrounds [...] it is difficult to open up conceptual space for a 'language' which is 'nobody's', yet 'everybody's' as ELF is claimed" (p. 263). Our findings verify that this conceptual gap – that exists in the minds of ELF users confines them to defer still to NS norms to a certain extent. Our informants were educated within EFL paradigm, but the reality they are engaged in necessitates and in a way compels them to develop a novel understanding of the English language they use at the workplace. With an EFL-oriented mind-set, they actually practice BELF, and they come to a realization about this only when they are asked explicitly. Therefore, we argue that business professionals would be able to benefit more from the advantages of BELF paradigm if they could embark on their professions having been trained within BELF paradigm at some point in their educational lives.

Finally, according to the findings of the survey, when the informants were asked to bring their own definitions to the English that is used in global business world, their responses displayed divergence. While half of the informants consider the use of Standard English as essential for global business life (i.e., Global business life requires a standard use of English: 6 strongly agree, 5 agree, 7 not sure, 1 disagree), exact same number of informants agreed that English is a global language and the important thing is not what type of English one uses but how one gets the work done (i.e., English is a global language and thus the important thing is not how you use English but how you get the work done: 4 strongly agree, 7 agree, 8 not sure). Interestingly, regarding these two points the same number of informants remained doubtful, which according to us again underscores their synthesis of EFL and ELF paradigms in their

daily language practices and communication with other business partners within the paradigm of BELF.

4. CONCLUSION

Our study aimed to investigate how business professionals in Turkey use and conceptualize English language in their daily business domains and how they position themselves as users of English and BELF. Analysis of data collected from business professionals in Turkey through survey and interviews demonstrate that English is of vital importance for globally operating business professionals in Turkey as competence in English is highly related to being successful in competitive business fields. Business professionals' initial contact with actual use of English is mediated within BELF paradigm. They use English to accomplish their daily business-related tasks with an emphasis on intelligibility without feeling the necessity of conforming to any Inner Circle variety. However, they received English instruction at schools within the paradigm of EFL where native speakerism could be observed in recruitments and teaching methodology. These findings suggest that informants moved from an EFL oriented educational background to a business life which caters BELF use and recognition. This discrepancy between their educational background and their actual use of English in the workplace situate them in a state of conceptual transition between the two paradigms that coexist within the minds of the same individuals.

Sifakis and Bayyurt (2015) highlight that "innovation in teaching is hard to come by and requires repetitive attempts and further ongoing reflection" (p. 483). Agreeing on this, we would like to stress that it would be fruitful to have attempts at facilitating innovation in English language courses, especially at business administration programs where English is taught with an ESP approach. Incorporating BELF perspective into ESP courses seems to be a must for language learners, who are future business professionals, to be better prepared for the current realities in the world of business communication. Such an education would be beneficial for learners as it would trigger a reflective journey during which they would reflect on their own language context and use critically. As a result, such an education would help them develop as successful BELF users in their future workplaces. Therefore, it is also important to integrate BELF into pre- and in-service teacher training. ESP teachers, particularly, should become BELF aware to deliver more effective ESP courses. This awareness can be developed by adopting "three phases of EIL teacher education" as suggested by Bayyurt and Sifakis (2017) and adapting this scheme into in-service teacher training of ESP teachers. Teacher trainers or institutional departments/stakeholders can help ESP teachers raise awareness about the global role of English in various contexts and domains, varieties of English other than that of Inner Circle contexts, and how English is used in international/global business world. This can be achieved by "exposing" ESP teachers to existing literature about EIL, ELF, World Englishes, and BELF, and to "online corpora" and "authentic examples of non-native discourse in action", which in this case refers to the use of English in the global workspaces (Bayyurt & Sifakis, 2017). Upon gaining a certain degree of awareness about these issues and strengthening their agency, ESP teachers can critically reflect on the needs of their own local contexts and their students' potential future needs. Accordingly, they can take actions in their ESP classrooms, design and develop materials to cater for these needs and train BELF aware Business students. In addition to raising teacher and learner awareness, what is also of high importance is developing curriculum in the light of BELF research findings as suggested by Pullin (2015).

Limitations of the present study as well as suggestions for future research are worth mentioning. To begin with, the findings of the study should be interpreted from context-specific point of view, i.e., Turkey as being an Expanding Circle country. The findings yield certain insights about business professionals' conceptualizations of English in Turkey, yet the findings do not provide any samples of written or spoken discourse that business professionals produce.

Thus, further studies would benefit from "fly-on-the-wall case studies" (Louhiala-Salminen, 2002), which include data collection and detailed analysis of such samples. Moreover, longitudinal ethnographic case studies would also benefit the field, as they would allow space and methodological tools for all-encompassing data that would reflect the whole reality of particular business contexts and provide certain solutions, if necessary.

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Uzun Özet

Küresel iş bağlamlarında kullanılan İngilizceyi tanımlamak ve kavramsallaştırmak oldukça güçtür; çünkü bu gruba dâhil olanlar- çok uluslu iş söylemlerinde bulunan iş insanları, günlük iş faaliyetlerinde

İngilizceyi anadil, ikinci dil veya yabancı dil olarak kullanan konuşmacılar ile iletişimde olabilirler (Nickerson, 2005). Ortak Dil olarak İngilizce (ODİ), küresel çalışma alanlarında kullanılan İngilizce için kapsamlı bir tanım sağlar, çünkü ODİ, hem uluslararası/yabancı hem de ana dili İngilizce olan kullanıcıları içerir ve küresel çalışma alanının yapısına uyar. Türkiye'deki uluslararası kurumsal şirketlerde İngilizceyi günlük etkileşimlerinde kullanan iş insanları İngilizceyi Yabancı Dil olarak (YDİ) öğrenme ve öğretme yaklaşımı çerçevesinde eğitilmişlerdir. Kankaanranta ve arkadaşları (2010) Ortak Dil olarak İngilizce (ODİ)'ye İ yani iş kelimesini ekleyerek Ortak Dil olarak İş İngilizcesi (ODİİ)'yi oluşturmuş ve söylem türünü daha ayırt edici, bağlam-duyarlı ve bağlam-özgül yapmıştır.

ODİİ iş insanlarının küresel bir şekilde çalışması için gereklidir ama bu yeni kavramı kullanmadan önce iş insanlarının bunu nasıl kavramsallaştırdıkları ve içselleştirdikleri önemlidir. İş dünyasındaki etkileşimlerinin çoğunluğu çok dilli/ kültürlü ortamda diğer dillerin konuşanlarıyla meydana geldiği için bu iş insanlarının ODİ kullanması, ODİİ yaklaşımı içinde farklı alanlarda, farklı amaçlarla ve iletişimsel sonuçlarıyla çalışmaya başlar. Türkiye, Kachru'nun (1992) Üç Eşmerkezli Çemberleri'ne uygun olarak Genişleyen bir Çember ülkesini temsil etmektedir, çünkü Türkiye'de İngilizce, Dış Çember ülkelerinin aksine herhangi bir kurumsal amaç veya resmi statüye atıfta bulunulmadan yabancı bir dil olarak öğrenilmekte, öğretilmekte ve kullanılmaktadır. Milli Eğitim Bakanlığının (MEB) İngilizceyi öne çıkaran yeni yapılandırmaları, birçok eğitim kurumunda eğitim dilinin İngilizce olması ve araştırmacıların Türkçe'nin Genişleyen Çemberden Dış Çembere dönüştüğünü öne sürmesi gibi değişiklikler toplumda İngilizce 'ye karşı olan bakış açısında değişikliğe neden olmuştur. Bu durum, YDİ ve ODİ kavramlarının farklılaşmasına yol açtı. Fakat buna rağmen Türkiye'de bu iki kavramın nasıl ele alındığı ve Türkiye'deki iş insanlarının günlük iş ortamlarında İngilizceyi nasıl kullandığı ve kavramsallaştırdıkları ve kendilerini İngilizce ve ODİİ kullanıcıları olarak nasıl konumlandırdıkları henüz araştırılmamıştır.

Bu amaçla bu çalışmada İstanbul'daki küresel şirketlerde çalışan 19 iş insanının İngilizceyi nasıl kullanıp, kavramsallaştırdıkları ve kendilerini İngilizce ve ODİİ kullanıcıları olarak nasıl gördükleri incelenmek istenmiştir. Araştırma verisi onay formu aldıktan sonra 19 iş insanına iş hayatlarına dair bir anket verilerek ve küresel müşterilere hizmet eden şirketlerde en iyi pozisyonlarda çalışan 5 katılımcı ile yarı yapılı görüşme yapılarak toplanmıştır. Türkçe hazırlanan ankette 5 ana kısım bulunmaktadır: A) Katılımcılar neden İngilizcenin iş yaşamları için önemli olduğunu düşünüyorlar, B) Katılımcıların İngilizce yeterliği, mesleki başarılarına nasıl bir katkıda bulunur, C) Katılımcılar, sözlü ve yazılı İngilizce kullanımları hakkında ne düşünüyorlar ve katılımcıların yabancı ortaklarla iletişimlerinde önemli buldukları hususlar nelerdir, D) Katılımcılar hangi İngilizce türünü standart İngilizce olarak görüyor ve E) katılımcıların demografik bilgileri. Yarı yapılı görüşmelerde ise anketten sonra katılımcıların algılarının daha derin değerlendirilmesi amaçlanmıştır.

Ankette ilk olarak iş insanlarının İngilizcenin önemi ve rolü hakkındaki fikirleri sorulmuştur. Daha sonra İngilizcenin farklı alanlardaki kullanımı ve İngilizcenin sadece belirli kullanımları (örneğin yazma, okuma) hakkında fikirleri alınmıştır. Yarı yapılı görüşmelerde ise anketten sonra katılımcıların algılarının ve iş ortamında kullandıkları İngilizcenin daha derin değerlendirilmesi amaçlanmıştır. Anket sonuçları iş insanlarının İngilizceyi hem şu anki çalışma pozisyonlarında, hem de gelecekteki iş imkânları için önemli bir kaynak olarak gördüklerini ve dil yetkinlik seviyesinin de önemli olduğunu düşündüklerini ortaya çıkarmıştır. Ayrıca, katılımcılar zaman içinde İngilizceyi daha iyi kullanmaya ve işle ilgili jargona hâkim olmaya başladıklarını belirtmişlerdir. Çalışmanın ana hedeflerinden biri olan ODİİ algısı ile ilgili olarak da katılımcıların çoğu dil kullanımı sırasında dil bilgisel doğruluktan ziyade ifadelerin anlaşılabilir olmasının iletişimde etkili olduğunu belirtmiştir. Katılımcıların ilk başta anadili İngilizce olanları norm olarak ve standart İngilizce olarak görseler de derine inildiğinde YDİ yaklaşımı içindeki fikirlerini yeniden yorumlayıp, önemli olanın anlaşılabilirlik olduğunu söyleyerek ODİ'ye doğru fikirlerini yeniden inşa ettiği görülmüştür. Buna göre, bağlamdaki iş insanları önce YDİ'yi yorumlayıp, ODİ'yi inşa ediyorlar. Son olarak geçiş evresinde ise ODİ ve ODİİ'yi sentezliyorlar. Özetle, Türkiye'deki iş insanlarının kafalarında YDİ ve ODİ bir arada var oldukları için, iki yaklaşımın sentezinden (YDİ ve ODİ) ODİİ'ye doğru yeniden bir yorumlama eğilimi içinde oldukları ortaya çıkmıştır.

Bu çalışmada, Türkiye'deki iş insanlarının günlük iş alanlarında İngilizce dilini nasıl kullanıp kavramsallaştırdıkları ve kendilerini İngilizce kullanıcısı ya da ODİİ kullanıcısı olarak nasıl konumladıkları araştırılmıştır. Sonuç olarak, Türkiye'de iş insanlarından anket ve görüşmeler yoluyla toplanan verilerin analizi, İngilizcenin rekabet gücü yüksek iş alanlarında başarılı olmakla yakından ilişkili olduğu için, Türkiye'de küresel düzeyde faaliyet gösteren profesyonel meslek mensupları için

İngilizcenin hayati öneme sahip olduğunu ortaya çıkarmıştır. Katılımcıların okul hayatları boyunca, YDİ yaklaşımı içinde İngilizce eğitimi almalarına rağmen iş hayatlarında İngilizceyi herhangi bir "Standart İngilizce" ye uymanın gerekliliğini hissetmeden ve anlaşılırlığı vurgulayarak işlerini yerine getirmek için kullandıkları ortaya çıkmıştır. Bu bulgular, katılımcıların YDİ odaklı bir eğitim geçmişinden, ODİİ kullanımını sağlayan bir iş yaşamına taşındıklarını göstermektedir.

Sifakis ve Bayyurt (2015) öğretimde yenilik yapmanın zor olduğunu ve sürekli girişim ve daha fazla yansıma gerektirdiğini vurgulamıştır (s. 483). Bu sebeple biz de İngilizcenin, Özel Amaç için İngilizce (ÖAİ) yaklaşımı ile öğretildiği, özellikle işletme gibi iş hayatının öğretildiği programlarda İngilizce dil kurslarında yeniliği kolaylaştırmaya yönelik girişimlerde bulunmanın gerektiğini ileri sürüyoruz. Öncelikle ÖAİ öğretmenlerinin, daha etkili bir ÖAİ dersi vermek için ODİİ farkındalığı olmalıdır. Bu sebeple bu öğretmenlerin eğitiminde ODİİ'ye yer verilmelidir. Ayrıca öğrencilerin de ODİİ farkındalığı olmalıdır. Bu nedenle, ODİİ yaklaşımını ÖAİ dersleriyle bütünleştirmek gerekir. Böyle bir eğitim, öğrencilerin kendi dil ortamlarında ve kullanımlarında kritik bir şekilde düşündükleri yansıtıcı bir yolculuk olur ve gelecekteki işyerlerinde başarılı bir ODİİ kullanıcısı olarak gelişmelerini sağlar. Bu noktada Bayyurt ve Saifakis'in (2017) "uluslararası bir dil olarak İngilizce" öğretimi bağlamında önerdikleri üç aşama ODİİ'ye adapte edilerek öğretmen eğitiminde kullanılabilir. Ayrıca Pullin'in (2015) de önerdiği gibi ODİİ çalışmaları ışığında bir müfredat hazırlanmalıdır.

Çalışmanın bulguları Türkiye'nin Genişleyen bir Çember ülkesi olduğu unutulmadan yorumlanmalıdır. Ayrıca sonuçlar iş insanlarının ürettiği herhangi bir yazılı veya sözlü söylem örneği sunmadığı için daha ileri çalışmalarda "örgütsel vaka çalışmaları"ndan yararlanabilinir. (Louhiala - Salminen, 2002).