

Instructional Context

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Narrowing our focus or gaze



This section—unlike *Establishing Context*—takes a closer look at **the context of *English education***

It explores factors that influence how the teaching and learning of English is understood in ***instructional contexts***

Instructional Context

In this section, you will create a «map» of the «landscape» or context in which you teach English, in order:

- to explore how ***open your context is*** to incorporating ELF-aware thinking and teaching
- to determine ***how much space or room*** you have to expand your teaching to include ELF-aware instruction

Instructional Context

Instructional context is influenced by *the attitudes and beliefs of key stakeholders* (i.e., government and private organizations, policy-makers, educational authorities, school administrators, test-makers, materials developers, teacher educators, teachers, parents, etc.)

Instructional Context

In this module, you will explore how local *policies*, *professional cultures*, and *classroom materials* influence your teaching of English and start to consider your own teaching within this landscape

This exploration will help you to begin to **formulate a context-appropriate plan** for including more ELF-aware teaching into your classroom

Instructional Context

More specifically, we will explore the **attitudes** and **beliefs** of:

- *policy makers*
- *English teaching professionals*
- *materials developers*

The “landscape” of ELT

To prepare for this process, you should create the following table:

POLICY MAKERS	TEACHERS AND PROFESSIONAL CULTURES	INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

Policy and policy-makers

First, you will **look at policy documents** as a way of exploring the beliefs and attitudes of **policymakers**.

To do this, you need to collect any relevant policy documents that describe the purpose of English teaching in your classroom.

These could include (*but are not limited to*):

- **curricular documents**
- **subject syllabi**
- **program descriptions**
- **proficiency descriptors or testing scales**

Policy and policy-makers



Now, read through the documents you have collected and note **important points** you discover **about «English»** and **the purpose(s) of learning English**.

Using key words and phrases from your notes, list these under «POLICY MAKERS»:

POLICY MAKERS		

Traditions of English as a foreign language

For much of its history, English education in non-native speaking contexts has been referred to as *foreign language education*

This tradition has reflected:

- a 20th century understanding of the connection between languages and nations (i.e., “French” is spoken in “France”, “Italian” is spoken in “Italy”, etc.)
- native-speaking nations’ ownership of these languages
- native-speaking nations as the source of the standards for accuracy and appropriateness for non-native contexts
- “nativeness” or the ability to use the language like a native speaker as the targeted outcome of foreign language education

Assumptions of foreign language teaching

- *English is owned by native speakers*
- *nativeness* and effective interaction with native speakers are the goals of English education for non-native speakers
- English speakers are *assumed* to be very alike or the *same*
- *systems of language and culture* are *separate from one another*
 - making the *comparison* of the *way of life and shared values* between the local society and the society where English is spoken *a preferred practice*

Reflection



Review your notes under **POLICY MAKERS** and consider **how prevalent foreign language thinking** is in your **policy documents**.

Draw a line under your notes so far and add your thoughts to the column.

POLICY MAKERS		
<i>Policy Documents (notes)</i>		
<i>To what degree does policy reflect <u>a foreign language way of thinking</u> about teaching English?</i>		



Analysing policy documents is a good first step in developing a **context-appropriate plan** for incorporating more **ELF-aware teaching** into your classroom teaching

Analysing these documents – be it curriculum, syllabi, program descriptions, etc. – is useful for identifying the tensions between different or competing aims for English language teaching—It can also reveal areas or spaces for changing current practice

Teachers and professional cultures

Policy documents ***alone*** do not determine what happens in the English classroom.

The attitudes of the English-teaching profession and English teacher education ***also*** open or close **opportunities** for including ELF-aware teaching in your classroom.

English teachers as foreign language teachers?

“**native-speakerism**” (Holliday, 2006)

Native speaker teachers as:

- unproblematic
- representing Western culture and English language ideals
- bearers of appropriate teaching methodology

Non-native speaking teachers as:

- generalized
- problematic
- in need of monitoring and correction

Promotes the idea that national languages are passed from generation to generation and **not** “strongly policed by authorities, educational institutions, academies, publishing houses and so on” (van Leeuwen, 2009: 218)

Teachers and professional cultures



Take a moment to watch the following video: [The "Best" English Teachers](#).

Note which characteristics define these teachers as «best». Add them to the table below.

POLICY MAKERS	TEACHERS AND PROFESSIONAL CULTURES	
<i>Policy Documents (notes)</i>	<i>Characteristics of «best» English teachers?</i>	
<i>To what degree does policy in your context reflect <u>a foreign language way of thinking</u> about teaching English?</i>		

Teachers and professional cultures

Draw a line under your notes in the middle column.

Now consider English teachers in your own context. List the characteristics that describe «the best» English teachers in your context below this line.

POLICY MAKERS	TEACHERS AND PROFESSIONAL CULTURES	
<i>Policy Documents (notes)</i>	<i>Some characteristics of English teachers promoted in the profession</i>	
<i>To what degree does policy in your context reflect <u>a foreign language way of thinking</u> about teaching English?</i>	<i>What makes English teachers «the best» in your local context?</i>	

Materials developers

Much discussion about **including ELF-aware teaching in the classroom** has been tied to adopting a «**with/within**» **approach**—where ELF-inspired materials are integrated into current teaching materials

Before you begin, collect either:

- a) the teaching resource you use most in your classroom (for example, a textbook or a workbook), or
- b) an assortment of teaching resources that you use often

Instructional Materials

Note to what degree these materials include:

- *English as a lingua franca* as a way of describing English
- a discussion of the role of intelligibility in communication
- intercultural encounters with people all over the world, including non-native speakers in interaction with one another
- a balance of NS, as well as NNS, cultural representations
- global issues explored from different cultures through English
- texts from English-language media not sourced from English-speaking countries
- texts from well-known NNS who are successful internationally
- learning activities encouraging learners to explore the use and practices of speakers and users of English in NNS-contexts

Instructional materials

Briefly review your notes, and summarize what you have discovered in «INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS».

POLICY MAKERS	TEACHERS AND PROFESSIONAL CULTURES	INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS
<i>Policy Documents (notes)</i>	<i>Some characteristics of English teachers promoted in the profession</i>	<i>Inclusion of ELF and ELF-awareness in textbooks or most-used instructional resources</i>
<i>To what degree does policy in your context reflect <u>a foreign language way of thinking</u> about teaching English?</i>	<i>Some characteristics of English teachers promoted locally</i>	

“Taking stock”



“To take stock” is to think carefully about a situation in order to form an opinion which will inform your decision about what to do next

By filling out the table in this unit, you have created an initial **«map» of your local instructional context** that reflects some of the attitudes and beliefs of policy-makers, the professional ELT community, and creators of instructional materials

Now it is time to think carefully about the extent to which you find a **«with/within» approach** that includes ELF-awareness **in your local context**

Activity—Forum Discussion



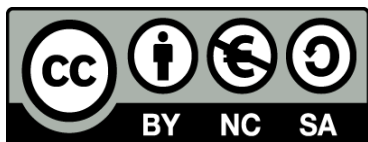
Consider the following questions:

- To what degree do you find **a balance between *foreign language thinking* and *ELF-awareness*** in your instructional context?
- What for you was ***surprising*** about your local context or something you had not considered before?
- Did you find that thinking across ELT policy, the ELT profession, and ELT instructional materials ***aligned***, or not? What ***disagreements or tensions*** did you find, if any?
- Finally, what ***space or possibilities*** do you see for integrating more ELF-aware teaching and learning in your own instructional context?

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