

# A Global Englishes Approach in ELT

## —Fostering Positive Attitudes towards English Use—

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#### Abstract

The objective of this study was to explore a presentation task as a new approach to recognizing the diversity of English. The task was designed to promote positive student attitudes towards using and learning English as a global language. The study, conducted in a 2022 spring semester class at a Japanese university, incorporated the presentation task in an English Linguistics course with the aim of enhancing student awareness of varieties of Englishes. For the presentation task, students interviewed international exchange students with L2 English. The data gathered in this research includes questionnaires and reflection comments from the students (n=20). Results indicate that recognition of varieties of Englishes can promote students' confidence as L2 English learners. Furthermore, the students gained a more relaxed attitude towards using English with non-native English speakers, focusing on communicating ideas rather than on accuracy. Incorporating the presentation task encouraged students to engage with varieties of Englishes and allowed them to deepen their understanding of roles of English used in global contexts. A further observation was greater confidence in using English for communication with non-native English speakers. On the other hand, while students accepted varieties of English on a theoretical basis, they continued to regard North American and British English as the "gold standard". Students still want to sound like native English speakers when they use the language.

**Key words** : Global Englishes Language Teaching (GELT), Varieties of English, World Englishes

## 1. Introduction

English is an international language and no longer a language for communicating only with native English speakers. It is a language of multilateral communication with its speakers in diverse ways around the world. English is a global language with global ownership. Thus, the needs of learners and the goal of English Language Teaching (ELT) have changed. Considering this context, isn't today's ELT mismatched with the current state of English usage?

In Japan, English has been a compulsory subject in elementary school since 2020, with the goal of improving students' communication skills in English. Students are required to set and meet goals reflecting the diversity of international society and be able to express their own opinions and thoughts on a wide range of topics. However, the English that Japanese learners aim for is almost always with 'native English' in mind. Books and YouTube videos such as 'Let's speak like natives', 'Idioms commonly used by Americans' are ubiquitous. English should not be a means to imitate Anglo-American culture, but a tool to express one's identity, including one's thoughts and feelings, to people around the world.

To this end, researchers in ELT have incorporated varieties of Englishes into classroom practices to raise learner awareness of global English (see Galloway & Rose, 2014, Sung, 2015; Galloway & Rose, 2018; Matsuura, 2021). Today's English usage requires that English practitioners and learners increase their cognizance of global English and acknowledge the importance of integrating a Global Englishes (GE)-oriented pedagogy into ELT. However, there remains a lack of research at the practical level. Also, there is a shortage of

resources and instruction materials. To address this gap, Galloway and Rose explored the use of student presentation tasks in the classroom (2018). It showcased that a presentation activity allowed learners to improve their awareness of the diversity of English and prepare them to use English as a *lingua franca*.

This research also implemented a presentation task as a classroom activity. The aim of this activity was to develop the idea of exposing learners to a variety of English in ELT. The presentation task required the students to interact with other non-native English speakers, thus engaging them more deeply with varieties of Englishes than in previous activities, such as listening and journaling.

After presenting the results of the activity, I discuss the relevance of learners' awareness and perception of, as well as their attitudes to, diverse English.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2-1. Learners' attitudes towards varieties of Englishes

Many researchers have investigated learner attitudes towards varieties of Englishes. These studies explore student attitudes towards native and non-native English and evaluate learner responses. Although the students displayed more positive attitudes towards native English than towards non-native varieties of Englishes, they were open-minded towards non-native English as they realized the contemporary practice of using English in international contexts. It was also observed that awareness of varieties of Englishes affected students' confidence in their own English. When

students encountered varieties of Englishes with different backgrounds, they became less reluctant to use English with their own accents. In other words, they became more confident in their own English (Ke & Cahyani, 2014; Kojima, 2017; Kanazawa 2022). After students realized that varieties of Englishes are used across the world, it allowed them to feel more comfortable using English with their own accents than they did before. Galloway & Rose (2014) suggested that “increased exposure to the diversity of English encourage students to see themselves as competent multilingual English speakers, not as inferior NNE speakers.” (Galloway & Rose, 2014, pg. 13).

## **2-2. Incorporating Global Englishes in the ELT classroom**

Incorporation of Global Englishes into classrooms has been investigated as a means of raising learner awareness of diverse English and paving the way for students to use English in lingua franca contexts (Suzuki, 2011; Galloway & Rose, 2014; Sung, 2015; Galloway & Rose, 2018; Liu & Cheng, 2017). Recent years have seen further developments in the inclusion of Global Englishes in classrooms, helping practitioners to enhance learner awareness of the diversity of English and prepare students to use English as a common, shared language.

A notable example of this development was the introduction by Galloway and Rose (2014) of a listening journal task in the ELT classroom. The listening journals were used as an autonomous learning tool to introduce students to the diversity of English. The students were asked to reflect on what they had heard. Researchers provided guidelines on areas to include in the reflection,

including speaker’s nationality, the student’s reason for selection and their detailed comments on the selected English. It was observed that the students gained interest in listening to varieties of Englishes and communicating with speakers from diverse lingua-cultural backgrounds. This indicates that the listening journal task provided opportunities not only to raise learners’ awareness of varieties of Englishes but also awareness of the spread of English, associated diversity in use of English, and ELF usage. However, for listening activities to succeed, great care must be given to the selection of listening materials (Sung, 2015). As motivation is an important factor in maintaining learner interest, it is crucial to consider the extent to which materials are motivating to learners. Some ‘authentic’ materials in real-life ELF communication might be too difficult to understand and may cause frustration among learners who have little experience of listening to unfamiliar accents. Sung suggests using ‘scripted’ ELF conversations recorded by speakers of different L1 backgrounds alongside ‘authentic’ materials. In addition, teachers could develop meaningful activities based on the listening materials in order to engage learners in the process of listening. Although studies have demonstrated the necessity of Global Englishes in the classroom, there is, to date, insufficient research on learner-centered activities, as well as a lack of appropriate listening materials for this purpose. The latter is a barrier to effectively incorporating Global Englishes in ELT classrooms (Galloway & Rose, 2018). To address these obstacles, Galloway & Rose (2018) conducted a further study that investigated the effects of student awareness of Global Englishes through a presentation task. The students were asked to

choose a regional variety of English that interested them. They researched the topic by using various resources, including learning materials and audio recordings, found online, in the library, and self-access center. The Englishes they selected covered a wide variety of contexts, such as English used as a native language, an official language, or a foreign language. The activity motivated the students to learn more about the respective countries in which the English was spoken and it allowed them to engage with one specific regional English variety of their own choice. Students' own selection of a variety of English is a different approach from the former studies conducted by many researchers. In the previous studies, practitioners chose the listening materials and provided them in the classrooms to examine attitudes toward different varieties of English. Learners differentiated the different accents from 'standard' English and reacted towards them. However, learners were not fully engaged with the variety of Englishes. This learner-centered approach by Galloway & Rose seemed to be successful not only in raising learner awareness of varieties of English but also in encouraging learners to actively engage with the varieties of Englishes. What is more, engagement with diverse English gave learners an opportunity to understand characteristics of a particular variety and the processes that shaped the English used in the region.

The current study develops this learner-centered approach by recommending more practical exposure to Global Englishes. It continues the approach of selecting a single variety of Global English, but within the range of Global Englishes spoken by current exchange students in the university. This stipulation allows the students to communicate

actively through interaction, which in turn promotes their awareness of the roles of English used in ELF contexts.

### 3. The Study

#### 3-1. Research questions

By recognizing the importance of incorporating GE (Global Englishes) into ELT classroom, this study aims to examine the following research questions:

- 1) To ascertain the extent to which students understand the role of English as a means of communication across the world.
- 2) To explore whether the GE approach facilitates students becoming active English learners and users.

#### 3-2. Context

This research was conducted in the 'English Linguistics III' course in the 2022 spring semester. The course was taught once a week for fourteen weeks. Presentations by groups took place in the fifteenth week after the students had been exposed to topics such as Kachru's (1985) World Englishes model (Inner, Outer and Expanding Circles), including the spread of English as an International Language, as a Global Language and as a Lingua Franca. The course book *Understanding English across Cultures* (Honna, Takeshita & D'Angelo, 2012) was used as the main textbook, alongside supplementary material including articles in the newspapers and online. Also, several YouTube videos of non-native English speakers talking were viewed during selected classes.

### 3-3. Participants and settings

The students who enrolled in this course were in their second year of a Foreign Language Studies degree program at a Japanese university. The number of students in this course was twenty (female 9, male 11). Their English proficiency level was varied. Their TOEIC IP scores ranged from 295 to 840. None of the students had any experience of staying overseas for over a month. However, all of them were required to participate in exchange programs with universities or take online English courses with language institutes abroad from the following year. Indeed, the purpose of the English Linguistics III course is to prepare students for the international component of their program.

The study used quantitative and qualitative data collection methods. Quantitatively, pre- and post-questionnaires were conducted on days one and fifteen of the course. Questionnaires were based on a previous study conducted in the university (Kanazawa, 2022). However, the questionnaires were revised to examine the extent to which the GE approach promotes student motivation in learning and using English. The scale included thirteen items for the pre-questionnaire and fifteen items for the post-questionnaire. They used a four-point Likert scale (where 1 = strongly disagree and 4 = strongly agree).

Qualitative data were collected by means of reflective comments written in a weekly worksheet. Alongside the reflective comments, questions assessed students' understanding of the content of the topic. The qualitative data were translated from L1 (Japanese) into L2 (English) by the researcher. In addition, the students were required to research one specific variety of English within non-native English

and make a group presentation in Japanese or English. There was one key condition for this task: selection of a variety of English spoken by current exchange students in the university (Indonesian, Sri Lankan, Vietnamese, Taiwanese and South Korean). Learners were given two weeks to ask exchange students about the topics they prepared by themselves.

In their presentations, students spoke on English characteristics, such as pronunciation and expressions used in that country, the system of English teaching and the role of English in respective. The students also presented the attitudes towards English found through their interviews. Each group prepared a ten-minute presentation on PowerPoint slides. During the presentation, the students were provided with a peer review sheet, including self-evaluation.

## 4. Results and Discussion

This section reports the data analysis collected from the pre- and post- questionnaires. First, the responses of the pre-questionnaire from the students revealed four main points: (1) recognition of English as an international language as well as a means of communication but, at the same time, the frequent response stating that users of English are mainly native English speakers; (2) belief that American and British English are 'correct English' and, thus, the students' ideal acquisition goal; (3) a lack of confidence in their own accented English, and a subsequent reluctance to use English; (4) significant interest in varieties of English used by non-native English speakers and a desire to interact with them.

The response from the post-questionnaire shows

some changes in learners' recognition of English users. The number of students believing that American and British English are the only 'correct' Englishes decreased. However, the number of students who desire to use one of these variants is largely unchanged. Regarding students' confidence and attitude towards their own English, there was some improvement. It indicated that students are still not confident in their own English but are keen to do so. The responses also indicated a growth in students' interest in specific varieties of English and interaction with people from non-native English-speaking countries. In addition, it showed a development in students' motivation for learning English and a positive attitude towards using English.

Next, the results taken from the reflective comments in the weekly worksheet showed that acknowledgement of varieties of English broadened students' views towards English. Selected examples of student statements are given below:

It is more important to make efforts to understand each other's English than to speak 'standard English'.

I want to understand and accept different accented English.

It is important to understand English speakers' ways of thinking, not just learn English.

Nowadays, not only native English speakers speak English.

I was surprised to know that we interact with

more non-native English speakers than with native English speakers in the real world.

I am interested in the fact that there is a large number of English users in Asia.

Students recognized the large number of non-native English speakers worldwide and the need to have a positive perception of varieties of English. Acknowledgement of varieties of English made them appreciate the real-life, current role of English; that is, a means of communication. The greater priority for users of English is mutual understanding, not judging one's 'non-standard English'. At the same time, while the students have *theoretical* understanding of the value of exposure to diverse English, there is less evidence of heartfelt, unequivocal support for the idea in practice (Sung, 2015). Most students acknowledge the current situation of English usage worldwide and the importance of mutual understanding. However, their goal of English acquisition remains American and British English.

Finally, students' positive responses about the course and the presentation task suggested the usefulness of this group activity in facilitating students becoming active English learners:

The presentation activity was enjoyable. It was the first time knowing about Korean English through our own research.

It was fun to find out the differences between Indian English, Singlish and French English.

I became more interested in Singapore through

the course, especially the historical background of the country.

These comments suggest that the presentation task gave students an opportunity to better understand the features of the respective English variant. In addition, many of the students mentioned the importance of making efforts in mutual understanding. I believe this is explained by students' struggles with situations they encountered and their learning through the process of interaction. The students became aware that successful communication with other English speakers does not rely on the forms of English they produced. They focused more on their communication skills. This finding, which was not observed in the former study (Kanazawa, 2022), represents a major outcome of this research. Opportunities for listening to varieties of English in a classroom were provided in the previous studies in the literature (see section 2.2 above). However, that approach only required students to listen to short speech in an attempt to raise their awareness of variation. The presentation task approach tested in this current research was more effective than the listening journal approach in forming students' attitudes towards Englishes (see also Galloway & Rose, 2018). This presentation approach allowed students to engage with one variety of English, and to actively explore how it is used.

## 5. Conclusion

This study examined how an approach to Global Englishes (GE) enhanced students' understanding

of the role of English used as a means of communication. It also explored the connection between the GE approach and students' attitudes as English users.

First, the results showed that the students recognized the role of English used worldwide through encountering varieties of English. However, they understood the contemporary context in a rather abstract way: it is obvious that the students' goal for English acquisition remains resolutely American or British English.

Next, regarding encouragement through the GE approach in the course, it was observed that the students became active English learners as well as users. The presentation task facilitated students' interaction with other non-native English speakers in person, which in turn allowed them gain confidence in use of their English. They started to realize that it was not shameful to use English with variation to achieve mutual understanding.

Finally, the presentation task was successful as a student-centered approach to motivate learners to engage with speakers from diverse lingua-cultural backgrounds.

In sum, this study has provided some suggestions on the implementation of a GE approach within the classroom. I would encourage teachers to explore further activities in their classroom to raise awareness of English variation and enhance students' confidence as users of a global language. For future research, students would benefit from more scaffolding and detailed guidelines on how to conduct their own research beforehand. This solid foundation will enable learners to conduct their research with clear goals and extensive knowledge.

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