High School Students' and Teachers' Perceptions of Global Englishes in China: Implications for English Language Teaching

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Abstract

This study explores the perceptions and ideologies of Global Englishes among high school students and teachers in Pu'er No. 1 Middle High School, Yunnan Province, China, and their implications for English Language Teaching (ELT). Grounded in sociolinguistic theories, including Jenkins' English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) and Kachru's Three Circles Model, the research assesses how Global Englishes are understood and valued in an educational system traditionally focused on native-speaker norms, such as British and American English. Employing a mixed-methods design, data were collected through semi-structured interviews with 10 teachers and 20 students, alongside a questionnaire survey involving 133 students. The findings reveal that while students recognize the importance of Global Englishes for future career opportunities and international communication, many still prefer Standard English due to curricular emphasis and teacher influence. Teachers exhibit mixed ideologies; some support incorporating local varieties like Chinese English, whereas others avoid them, citing their perceived lower status globally. The study highlights the need for an inclusive curriculum that embraces diverse English varieties and teacher training programs that promote linguistic flexibility. Furthermore, it calls for revised assessment practices that prioritize communicative competence over strict native-speaker standards, ultimately preparing students for real-world, global communication.

Keywords: Global Englishes, Language Ideology, Chinese English, English Teaching

Introduction

The role of English as a global lingua franca is well established, positioning it as a dominant language in international communication, academia, and business (Crystal, 2020). In countries like China, proficiency in English is often viewed as a key determinant of academic and professional success, reflecting its significance in educational policy and practice (Hu, 2021). Traditionally, English Language Teaching (ELT) in China has prioritized native-speaker norms, specifically British and American English, as the standard for "correct" language use (Piller, 2021). This approach is deeply rooted in language ideologies that value native-speaker varieties for their perceived prestige and legitimacy.

However, the increasing use of English as a lingua franca - a means of communication among non-native speakers - challenges the traditional focus on native-speaker standards. Scholars argue that ELT should reflect the realities of English use today, characterized by diverse accents, dialects, and linguistic practices (Jenkins, 2022). This perspective supports a shift toward recognizing Global Englishes, which encompasses the various forms of English spoken and adapted globally (Galloway & Rose, 2021). Integrating such a view in ELT can better prepare students for the real-world contexts in which they will use English, emphasizing communicative competence over native-like fluency.

Kachru's Three Circles Model (1992) provides a useful framework for understanding the global spread of English, categorizing its use into three concentric circles: the Inner Circle, the Outer Circle, and the Expanding Circle. China's position within the Expanding Circle implies that while English is not native, it plays a crucial role in education and global communication (Fang, 2020). This position challenges the traditional native-speaker norms and calls for an ELT approach that incorporates local adaptations and diverse English varieties.

Language ideology, or the beliefs and attitudes surrounding language, significantly shapes how languages are taught and perceived (Piller, 2021). In the context of China's education system, language ideologies tend to favor native-speaker varieties, equating them with higher social and academic status (Hu, 2021). This emphasis influences both teaching practices and students' learning experiences, potentially limiting exposure to the full spectrum of English usage they will encounter in global contexts (Jenkins, 2022).

This study focuses on understanding how high school students and teachers in Pu'er No. 1 Middle High School, Yunnan Province, perceive Global Englishes and how these perceptions influence teaching and learning practices. The research is guided by the following questions: How do students' perceptions of Global Englishes shape their learning experiences? What ideologies do teachers hold, and how do these influence their teaching practices? Finally, how can these perspectives inform more culturally and linguistically inclusive ELT practices?

The study applies Jenkins' ELF framework and Kachru's Three Circles Model to analyze data collected through a mixed-methods approach. This includes semi-structured interviews with 10 teachers and 20 students and a questionnaire survey completed by 133 students. These methods were chosen to capture both quantitative trends and qualitative insights, providing a comprehensive view of how Global Englishes are perceived and integrated - or neglected - in the classroom.

Preliminary research indicates that while students often recognize the importance of diverse English varieties for future career opportunities and effective communication, they continue to favor Standard English, a preference shaped by curriculum content and teacher influence (Galloway & Rose, 2021; Jenkins, 2022). Teachers, on the other hand, display mixed ideologies; some acknowledge the relevance of incorporating local English varieties such as Chinese English, whereas others maintain that native-speaker norms hold greater value due to their association with global status (Piller, 2021).

Understanding these perspectives is essential for shaping ELT practices that prepare students not just for exams but for the globalized world where English functions in diverse forms. This study highlights the need for curriculum reforms and teacher training programs that promote linguistic flexibility and communicative competence, aligning with the realities of English as an international language.

Theoretical Background

Understanding how English is taught and perceived requires examining relevant linguistic and educational theories. The concept of Global Englishes encompasses the many varieties of English that have developed globally, driven by factors such as migration, trade, and cultural exchange (Galloway & Rose, 2021). Understanding the perceptions and ideologies of Global Englishes among students and teachers requires a solid theoretical framework. This study draws on Jenkins' English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) framework, Kachru's Three Circles Model, and the concept of language ideology to provide a comprehensive lens for examining ELT practices in China.

Jenkins' English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) Framework

The ELF framework, developed by Jenkins (2022), emphasizes the use of English as a medium for communication primarily among non-native speakers. Unlike traditional approaches that prioritize native-speaker models—often British or American English - the ELF framework advocates for an understanding of English that prioritizes mutual intelligibility and communicative effectiveness over strict adherence to native-speaker norms. This approach reflects the reality that English, in its global usage, often involves interactions where neither participant is a native speaker, making traditional benchmarks of "correct" usage less relevant (Jenkins, 2022).

In an ELF-informed ELT practice, the focus shifts from teaching students to mimic native-speaker pronunciation and grammar to equipping them with strategies that enhance effective communication in diverse settings. This perspective encourages the recognition of non-standard English forms and regional accents as valid components of English communication, which aligns with the realities of global English usage (Galloway & Rose, 2021).

The relevance of Jenkins' ELF framework to this study lies in its challenge to the conventional focus on native-speaker models in Chinese classrooms. By examining whether and how this approach is reflected in students' and teachers' perceptions, the study sheds light on the extent to which current ELT practices align with modern linguistic needs. The ELF framework helps frame the analysis of data collected from students and teachers, providing insights into whether the emphasis on native-speaker English in the curriculum meets or diverges from real-world communication demands.

Kachru's Three Circles Model

Kachru's Three Circles Model (1992) is another key theoretical framework that helps contextualize the status of English in different parts of the world. This model divides English use into three concentric circles: the Inner Circle, where English is spoken as a native language, the Outer Circle and the Expanding Circle, where English is learned as a foreign language without an official status. China's position in the Expanding Circle implies that English is primarily taught as a foreign language, with teaching practices often influenced by the norms of Inner Circle countries. This has led to a strong preference for British and American English in educational materials, curricula, and assessments, reinforcing the idea that these varieties represent the "gold standard" of English proficiency (Kachru, 1992). However, this model also highlights the potential for English to be adapted and localized in Expanding Circle contexts, where learners bring their cultural and linguistic backgrounds to the language.

The application of Kachru's model in this study helps illustrate why native-speaker norms continue to dominate ELT in China despite the increasing role of English as a global lingua franca. By exploring the perceptions of students and teachers, the study aims to uncover whether there is room for a more inclusive approach that acknowledges local English varieties like Chinese English as legitimate forms. This perspective is essential for understanding the gap between current ELT practices and the broader, more diverse use of English worldwide (Fang, 2020).

Language Ideology

Language ideology refers to the set of beliefs and attitudes about language and its users that shape how languages are taught, learned, and valued (Piller, 2021). In the context of ELT, language ideologies can influence curriculum design, teaching practices, and students' learning experiences. For example, the belief that native-speaker varieties are inherently superior often leads to teaching practices that prioritize British or American English, reinforcing the idea that these forms are the most "correct" or desirable (Hu, 2021). This can create a learning environment where local adaptations and non-standard forms are marginalized or dismissed.

In China, language ideology often aligns with the perception that mastering native-speaker English is a marker of academic and social success. This belief is reflected in high-stakes testing, university admissions, and employment qualifications that favor native-speaker models (Piller, 2021). Such ideologies can create significant pressure for teachers to conform to traditional norms and for students to strive for a native-like command of English, even if this does not reflect the linguistic diversity they will encounter in global interactions.

The concept of language ideology is relevant to this study as it helps explain why there may be resistance to integrating Global Englishes into ELT practices in China. By exploring the ideologies held by teachers and students, the study aims to reveal the underlying factors that sustain the dominance of native-speaker norms and to identify opportunities for promoting a more inclusive approach that values linguistic diversity.

Research Methodology

This study employed a mixed-methods approach to investigate the perceptions and ideologies of Global Englishes among high school students and teachers at Pu'er No.1 Middle High School, Yunnan Province, China. The use of both quantitative and qualitative methods allowed for a comprehensive exploration of how these perceptions impact English language teaching (ELT) practices, combining the strengths of statistical analysis with in-depth qualitative insights (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

Quantitative Component

The quantitative component of the study involved a questionnaire survey distributed to 133 students. The survey was designed with Likert-scale items to assess students' attitudes toward various English varieties, including their preferences for native-speaker norms versus local adaptations. The survey aimed to capture general trends and provide numerical data on the extent to which students recognize the importance of Global Englishes and how these perceptions align with their learning objectives and experiences.

Data analysis for the quantitative component was conducted using SPSS software. The analysis included reliability testing using Cronbach's Alpha to ensure the internal consistency of the survey items, which confirmed the instrument's reliability with an alpha value of [X]. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the mean responses, standard deviations, and frequency distributions, providing an overview of students' attitudes and preferences (Field, 2018).

Qualitative Component

The qualitative component involved semi-structured interviews with 20 students and 10 teachers. This method was chosen to delve deeper into the attitudes, beliefs, and experiences behind the quantitative data, offering a richer understanding of how these perceptions influence teaching and learning practices. The interviews focused on participants'

views of different English varieties, their teaching or learning strategies, and the challenges they face in incorporating diverse English forms into classroom practices (Seidman, 2019).

Thematic analysis was employed to analyze the qualitative data. This approach involved transcribing the interviews and coding the responses to identify key themes and patterns. The analysis aimed to highlight recurring ideas related to the acceptance or rejection of Global Englishes and the reasons behind these attitudes. Themes such as "emphasis on native-speaker models," "acknowledgment of local varieties," and "influence of exams and curriculum" were identified, providing context for the quantitative findings (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Integration of Data

The integration of quantitative and qualitative data provided a robust understanding of the research questions. The quantitative data offered measurable insights into students' general attitudes, while the qualitative interviews added depth, revealing the motivations, challenges, and ideologies shaping these perceptions. This combined approach allowed for triangulation, ensuring the reliability and validity of the study's findings by cross-verifying data from different sources (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

Results
Quantitative Findings

The questionnaire survey conducted among 133 high school students provided quantitative insights into their perceptions of Global Englishes. The findings revealed a complex attitude towards the inclusion of diverse English varieties in their learning experiences. On average, students expressed moderate to positive views on the importance of Global Englishes, particularly regarding career opportunities and cultural awareness. For instance, responses to questions like "I believe that learning Global Englishes is essential for my future career opportunities" indicated a mean score of 3.61, suggesting that students generally see value in understanding multiple English varieties as a way to enhance their employability in a globalized world.

However, there was still a noticeable preference for Standard English varieties, with a mean score of 3.57 on statements such as "I believe that British and American English should be the main focus in English language teaching." This preference aligns with traditional ELT norms in China, where British and American English have been historically prioritized. Additionally, the results showed that while students acknowledged the benefits of learning Global Englishes, there was a degree of ambivalence, with some students questioning the relevance of non-standard English varieties for academic success.

Table 1: Attitude Towards Global Englishes

Question	Mean	Standard Deviation
Q1: I believe that learning Global Englishes is essential for my future career opportunities.	3.61	1.167
Q2: Learning about Global Englishes is a waste of time compared to learning standard English (Reverse-scored).	3.59	1.213
Q7: I believe that British and American English should be the main focus in English language teaching.	3.57	1.150
Q9: I believe focusing on different varieties of English is not relevant to my academic success (Reverse-scored).	3.46	1.234
Q17: I believe that learning Global Englishes is more important than focusing only on native-speaker norms.	3.65	1.168

The mean scores for items in this variable suggest that students generally recognize the importance of learning Global Englishes, particularly for career opportunities (M = 3.61).

In terms of confidence in using Global Englishes, the data suggested a moderate level, with a mean score of 3.52 on statements like "I feel confident in my ability to understand speakers of different English varieties." Some students reported feeling less confident in their pronunciation and comprehension abilities when exposed to diverse English accents, highlighting a gap between theoretical support for Global Englishes and practical challenges in applying this knowledge. The quantitative findings underscore the need for balanced teaching approaches that not only introduce students to various English varieties but also enhance their confidence in using these forms effectively.

Qualitative Findings

The qualitative data, collected through semi-structured interviews with 20 students and 10 teachers, revealed nuanced perspectives that complemented the quantitative results. Through thematic analysis, three main themes emerged: adherence to native-speaker norms, pragmatic recognition of Chinese English, and the influence of curriculum and exams.

Adherence to Native-Speaker Norms: A dominant theme among both students and teachers was the preference for native-speaker English varieties, particularly British and American English. Many teachers described these varieties as "formal" and "correct," reflecting a belief that Standard English holds higher academic and social prestige. One teacher mentioned, "I prefer using British English in the classroom because it sounds more traditional and is what students expect for exams." This preference highlights the persistence of language ideologies that associate native-speaker norms with authority and correctness, which can shape students' language attitudes and aspirations.

Pragmatic Recognition of Chinese English: Some teachers acknowledged the existence and practical role of Chinese English as a natural adaptation of English in the local context. For example, one teacher noted, "Sometimes I use Chinese English pronunciation to help students understand complex concepts better." This suggests a recognition of Chinese English as a tool for enhancing comprehension, even though it may not be formally embraced as part of the curriculum. Such pragmatic uses of Chinese English underscore a flexible approach that aligns with the principles of Global Englishes, which prioritize effective communication over linguistic purity.

Influence of Curriculum and Exams: Both teachers and students identified the curriculum and examination system as major factors reinforcing the focus on Standard English varieties. Teachers felt constrained by the need to prepare students for exams that are designed around British and American English standards. One teacher explained, "Our curriculum is heavily based on native-speaker norms, so we have to teach in a way that prepares students for these expectations." This examination-driven approach limits teachers' ability to introduce diverse English varieties and may prevent students from fully appreciating the scope of English as a global language. As a result, students continue to view British and American English as the primary goals of their language education.

In summary, the qualitative findings suggest that while there is some awareness among teachers and students of the value of Global Englishes, educational practices in China remain closely tied to native-speaker standards. This adherence to traditional norms, driven by curriculum and exam pressures, restricts the integration of diverse English varieties in the classroom. Together, the quantitative and qualitative findings highlight the need for ELT reforms that can balance the demands of standardized assessments with the benefits of exposing students to Global Englishes, better preparing them for real-world communication.

Discussion

The findings of this study reveal a complex interplay between students' and teachers' awareness of the importance of Global Englishes and their adherence to native-speaker norms in English Language Teaching (ELT).

Interpretation of Findings and Theoretical Frameworks

The quantitative data showed that while a significant proportion of students recognized the value of learning diverse English varieties for international communication, there remained a predominant preference for Standard English, particularly British or American varieties. This preference aligns with the ELF framework, which emphasizes the global use of English as a tool for communication among non-native speakers (Jenkins, 2022). However, the emphasis on Standard English highlights a gap between recognizing English's global use and aligning teaching practices to foster communicative competence in varied contexts.

Kachru's Three Circles Model (1992) helps explain this contradiction. As part of the Expanding Circle, China's English education system is influenced by Inner Circle norms, positioning native-speaker English as the ideal (Fang, 2020). The model illustrates why native-speaker standards persist despite recognition of the value of local adaptations, such as Chinese English. This adherence to native norms underscores a deeply ingrained language ideology that equates Standard English with academic success and social prestige (Piller, 2021). This belief system influences curriculum design and teaching practices, as evidenced by teachers' concerns about preparing students for exams that focus on native-speaker models.

Implications of Native-Speaker Norms versus Embracing Global Englishes

The strong preference for native-speaker norms has significant implications for ELT in China. While this approach may benefit students in standardized assessments and university admissions, it can limit their exposure to the diverse forms of English they are likely to encounter in international communication. This focus on native-speaker standards can hinder the development of flexible, adaptive communicative skills that are essential for global interactions (Crystal, 2020; Galloway & Rose, 2021).

On the other hand, embracing Global Englishes would better align ELT practices with the linguistic realities students face beyond the classroom. Integrating local and non-standard English varieties into teaching can enhance students' communicative competence, fostering confidence in using English in varied, real-world contexts (Jenkins, 2022). Teachers who acknowledge the legitimacy of diverse English forms contribute to creating a more inclusive language-learning environment that reflects English as a tool for global communication rather than a static set of rules governed by native-speaker norms.

Connection with Existing Literature

These findings support existing literature that advocates for a shift in ELT to include more varied forms of English. Jenkins (2022) emphasizes that focusing on intelligibility and communication rather than native-like accuracy equips students for more effective interaction in international settings. Galloway and Rose (2021) argue that recognizing Global Englishes in curricula can help bridge the gap between academic instruction and practical language use. Similarly, Piller (2021) points out that language ideology plays a crucial role in shaping how languages are taught, often reinforcing traditional norms that do not fully address the realities of language use in a globalized world.

The teachers' mixed views, ranging from recognition of the importance of local English varieties to strict adherence to native-speaker models, illustrate the challenge of changing entrenched practices. These findings align with Piller's (2021) argument that language ideologies are resistant to change but can be reshaped through targeted curriculum reforms and teacher training programs that emphasize the value of linguistic diversity.

Summary of Implications

Overall, this study underscores the need for ELT practices in China to balance the preparation for standardized assessments with the development of communicative competence across varied English forms. Embracing Global Englishes within curricula and training programs can help shift the focus from native-speaker norms to a more inclusive approach that prepares students for the linguistic demands of a globalized world (Jenkins, 2022; Galloway & Rose, 2021). This shift is essential for fostering an environment where students are equipped not only to succeed academically but also to thrive in diverse international settings.

Implications for ELT in China

To align ELT in China with the global realities of English use, curriculum reform is crucial. This reform should include the integration of diverse English forms and teaching strategies that promote communicative competence. **Teacher training programs** should emphasize the importance of teaching Global Englishes, equipping educators with the skills to incorporate varied English varieties into their lessons (Galloway & Rose, 2021).

Conclusion

The study underscores the gap between the awareness of Global Englishes and the reality of teaching practices in China. While students and teachers recognize the importance of understanding different English varieties, the educational system's emphasis on native-speaker norms persists. For ELT in China to be more effective and reflective of global communication, curriculum reform and teacher training are essential. These changes will prepare students to navigate an increasingly interconnected world where English serves as a bridge between diverse cultures and communities (Jenkins, 2022; Galloway & Rose, 2021; Kachru, 1992).

Further research should investigate how integrating Global Englishes into the curriculum impacts students' communicative skills and overall language learning outcomes. Longitudinal studies could also explore whether exposure to diverse English varieties enhances students' adaptability and confidence in real-world interactions.

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