ATTITUDES OF ENGLISH EDUCATION STUDENTS TOWARDS WORLD ENGLISHES: PREFERENCES AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES

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A R T I C L E I N F O	**A B S T R A K**

This study is based on the concept of World Englishes (WE). It aims to examine the attitudes and awareness of university students towards different varieties of English. Data was collected from 38 students through a questionnaire, with 10 participants selected for interviews. The mixed method design of concurrent embedded was used to analyze the data, combining qualitative interview data with quantitative questionnaire data for a comprehensive result. The qualitative data from the interview were integrated with the quantitative data from the questionnaire to reinforce the findings. All data collected from the participants were carefully examined and analyzed. The study revealed that students possess a general awareness and positive attitudes towards various forms of English. However, their limited exposure to these varieties hinders their knowledge and understanding of them. This preference reflects the influence of socio-cultural factors on language learning and suggests the need for a more comprehensive approach to English language education that includes exposure to world Englishes.

INTRODUCTION

English has achieved global status due to its widespread use and recognition across countries. It is the most taught and learned language worldwide, allowing for the development of various English varieties within the Expanding Circle (Kurniawan et al., 2024). World Englishes provide an opportunity for speakers to express their own accents and dialects, rather than conforming to standardized English with different cultural backgrounds. Indian English, for example, has gained familiarity internationally and has its own distinct variety.

English has become Englishes, a reality acknowledged by scholars in the field of Foreign Language Teaching (FLT) (Alasmari, 2018). However, integrating World Englishes in ELT is not straightforward due to the customary use of Standard English

(Sangpetch et al., 2023). To address this, teachers are suggested to introduce other varieties of English alongside the Inner Circle countries' dialect and accent in the classroom (Monfared & Khatib, 2018). This approach is supported by the positive attitude of students towards World Englishes and their openness to different varieties of English (Franssisca & Subekti, 2022).

Based on the theories above, the researchers attempt to examine students' common reasons to learn and use English. Several researchers believe that people's motivations to study English are various. English is widely regarded as a valuable tool for communication among people from different countries. Shrishthy (2022) suggests that one of the main reasons people learn and use English is to communicate with others in the global community. This highlights the importance of English as an international language. It is crucial for learners to be able to understand various accents and varieties, rather than simply imitating the standard and norm of the Inner Circle (Boonsuk & Fang, 2020).

A few models have been developed by scholars to categorize English and its varieties in the world. One such model, introduced by Kachru in 1985, is known as the circle-based model of English language spread. Kachru's model recognizes three language norms spoken within specific communities: the Inner Circle, the Outer Circle, and the Expanded Circle. The Inner Circle comprises native-English countries where English is used in all aspects of communication. The Outer Circle includes countries where English is spoken as a second language. Lastly, the Expanding Circle consists of countries where English has gained importance in official or governmental contexts.

World Englishes

The term "World Englishes" is commonly used to describe the institutionalized second-language varieties of English spoken globally, particularly in non-native English countries. It is a conceptual framework that helps us understand the spread and function of English language worldwide. These distinct varieties of English have been nativized and are influenced by sociolinguistic and cultural factors. In this study, the researcher focuses on accent distinctions that differentiate one sound of English from others, based on the circle of influence and its sociolinguistic and cultural variations.
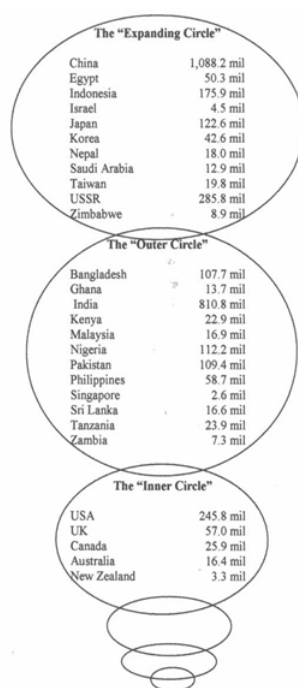
Figure 1. Kachru's model of World Englishes (adopted from Bauer, 2002, p.23).

Attitude

Attitude, as defined by Getie (2020), is an evaluative reaction or judgment towards a person, event, or aspect of the environment. These reactions and responses to objects and feelings allow attitudes to be identified and measured. Attitude encompasses beliefs, feelings, and intentions shaped by experience. These influence how individuals react and respond to various objects, situations, and people. Attitudes are acquired through firsthand encounters, which shape our perceptions and judgments. They play a crucial role in shaping behavior and decision-making. Our attitudes can be influenced by a variety of factors, such as culture, upbringing, and personal experiences. It is important to recognize the impact of attitudes on our interactions and to strive for open-mindedness and understanding in our dealings with others. Particularly, attitudes towards languages play a fundamental role in influencing how individuals react and respond to different languages, accents, language varieties, and even the people who speak them.

Additionally, some English Education students believe they are not bound to a single standard of English. However, others argue that mastering Standard English is essential for effective communication in a global community. Some students prioritize standardized English over accents in their learning process. Therefore, it can be concluded that there are varying opinions among the English Education students regarding Standard English and World Englishes.

In this research, the researchers aim to explore students' attitudes towards different varieties of English. They believe that learning English goes beyond mimicking certain accents or dialects, but also includes the opportunity for students to express their own varieties of English. By considering various aspects, the researchers have found that many students share this belief. Thus, the current study on students' attitudes towards different varieties of English positions itself within this ongoing discourse on Standard English and World Englishes. While there has been considerable research on learners' motivations to learn English, their perceptions of World Englishes, and the challenges of integrating World Englishes in ELT, this study aims to build upon this foundation by specifically focusing on how English Education students view the role of Standard English and World Englishes in their learning processes

RESEARCH METHOD

The research was conducted at English Education Department from three universities in Banda Aceh. Thirty-eight seventh semester students participated in the research. The study utilized the concurrent embedded or concurrent nested strategy of mixed methods design. A Likert-type Questionnaire was used to collect quantitative data on their attitudes. Additionally, interviews with selected participants provided qualitative data for a deeper understanding. Overall, this research employed a mixed methods design to collect and combine quantitative and qualitative data for interpretation.

The researchers employed both open and closed-ended questionnaires for this study. The closed-ended questionnaire sought the students' responses to provided statements, while the open-ended questionnaire allowed students to express their prior knowledge of various English varieties and world Englishes. Interviews were recorded and transcribed for analysis and interpretation. Common patterns were identified and investigated separately from the questionnaire data. The data obtained from the questionnaires were then examined in conjunction with the research questions to provide explanations.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Questionnaire Result

The result of the students' attitude toward World of English in this study is represented in Table 1.

The questionnaire results reveal that the participants highly value English as an international language and recognize its importance in cross-cultural communication. A

staggering 97% of respondents agreed that English is widely used worldwide (#1). Furthermore, all participants (100%) acknowledged the significance of mastering English in understanding people from different countries (#2). This aligns with the majority opinion (92%) that learning the language is integral to understanding the culture of English-speaking countries (#3). Consequently, an overwhelming 97% of participants expressed a desire to live in an English-speaking country, such as the United States or the United Kingdom (#4).

Tabel 1. The Questionnaire Result on Students's Attitude toward WE

Statement	Agreement %		U	Disagreement %	
	SA	A		D	SD
1. English is the most widely used language in the world.	29 75%	8 24%	1 3%	-	-
2. Mastering English is crucial for effective communication with people from different countries.	30 79%	8 21%		-	-
3. Mastering English is important in understanding the cultures of English-speaking countries, like U.S.A. or U.K.	25 66%	10 26%	3 8%	-	-
4. If given the opportunity, I would love to travel to English-speaking countries such as the United States of America or the United Kingdom.	29 76%	8 21%	1 3%	-	-
5. I don't like learning English.	-	1 3%	5 13%	19 50%	13 34%
6. British English and American English are the two primary variations of the English language spoken worldwide.	22 58%	13 34%	3 8%	-	-
7. British English and American English are widely recognized as two major accents in the world.	22 58%	14 36%	1 3%	1 3%	-
8. The English spoken by Indian people is not authentic English.	7 18%	14 37%	12 32%	1 3%	4 10%
9. There are many varieties of English across the world.	17 45%	16 42%	4 13%	-	-
10. I prefer to either learn American or British English over Indian or Singapore English.	20 52%	8 21%	9 24%	-	1 3%
11. The variety of English I speak is not important as long as I am understood by others.	6 16%	16 42%	8 21%	-	8 21%
12. I have heard of the Phrase: China English or Indian English.	11 29%	17 45%	7 18%	-	3 8%
13. When I speak English, I want to be to be able to speak like a native speaker.	26 68%	11 29%	1 3%	-	-

* Strongly Agree = SA, Agree = A, Uncertain = U, Strongly Disagree = SD

Item number 5, "I don't like learning English", garnered a noteworthy result. A significant majority of 84% of the participants expressed strong disagreement with this statement. During the subsequent interview, it was discovered that one possible explanation for this finding is that some students perceive learning English as an "easy" task. It is worth noting that this perception may be influenced by the fact that some of the participants come from a boarding school educational background.

The analysis of the Likert-scale items reveals a mixed range of attitudes among the students regarding different varieties of English. A significant majority of respondents, 87%, agreed that there are many varieties of English in the world. Conversely, a slightly higher percentage, 92%, believed that British English and American English are the major varieties of English globally. The percentages reveal a slight distinction between two items: 5%. This suggests that while most respondents acknowledge the existence of English varieties, they strongly react against the idea of a standard-English norm. This is supported by the fact that 94% agreed that the two major accents of English are significant (#7). However, more than half of the respondents (53%) do not consider English spoken by Indians as authentic, although 32% are uncertain about this statement (#8).

The study reveals that English students are knowledgeable about various English varieties, but they display greater confidence in British and American English, which are considered prestigious. Interestingly, only a portion of the students (74%) have recognized the existence of China English and Indian English. It is worth noting, however, that 18% of respondents expressed uncertainty about these phrases, which should not be dismissed as insignificant (#12).

The majority of respondents (73%) express a preference for learning American or British varieties of English over other varieties (#10). This aligns with the desire of 97% of respondents to speak English like a native speaker (#13).

At point 11, an interesting finding emerged regarding the level of disagreement and uncertainty among respondents. 21% expressed disagreement with the statement about not caring about the variety of English used as long as they are understood. Additionally, 21% showed doubt towards this statement. This finding suggests that while respondents expressed a desire to sound like native speakers, there was also uncertainty surrounding this preference. Follow-up interviews revealed that mixed attitudes towards varieties of English may have influenced this parallelism in judgments. Some students prioritize native English pronunciation for its international recognition, while others understand and accept that Chinese students may speak English with an accent due to it not being their first language. This issue will be further discussed in the next section.

Interview Results

The study's findings indicate that the majority of interviewees perceive English as a symbol of internationalization and recognize its significant role in global communication. As exemplified by one student's statement, English is acknowledged as a lingua franca.

> "*English has become a global language due to globalization. It has a significant impact on our development… With the spread of English, communication between people from different countries has been greatly facilitated. The existence of various English varieties further contributes to the worldwide dissemination of the language.*"

Globalization has played a significant role in the widespread adoption of English worldwide. The belief is that the emergence of various forms of English, known as world Englishes, is a natural consequence of globalization. These world Englishes reflect the diverse cultural and linguistic influences present in different regions across the globe. As a result, English has become a global language that facilitates communication and fosters cultural exchange among people from different backgrounds.

> "*It is common for a language to become international and for people to incorporate it into their cultures.*"

Another factor that influences one's language is cultural background. Cultural background plays a significant role in shaping the way individuals communicate. It encompasses various aspects such as traditions, customs, and values that are passed down from generation to generation. Language is deeply intertwined with culture, as it reflects the unique perspectives and experiences of a particular community. Therefore, it is not surprising that cultural background has a profound impact on one's language development.

> "*When learning English, it is important to not only focus on the language itself, but also on the cultures associated with it. This is especially true in countries like China, where speaking English will inevitably blend with Chinese culture. Additionally, it is worth noting that English is not the first language of the country.*"

> "*When my friend stays in China, they speak English based on their accents, not following the standardized accents. However, I am not really familiar with Chinglish.*"

Many students recognize the different types of English, but they tend to favor American English and British English. The survey results show that most participants view American and British English as the ideal standards to learn or imitate because they find them "familiar", "easy to pronounce", "attractive", and "cool".

The study found that participants acknowledged the existence of English varieties

beyond American and British English. However, there was a preference for Standard English over non-native English. The interview results provided valuable insights into the participants' mixed attitudes towards different varieties of English. It was evident that although students had heard of Chinese English or Indian English, their lack of exposure to these varieties resulted in limited knowledge of how Chinglish or Inglish are actually spoken. In his study, Timmy (2002) found that students are aware of and comprehend the norms and structure of Standard English. However, they often feel uncertain and confused when it comes to identifying the specific variety of non-native English spoken by non-native speakers. As a result, students tend to believe that learning American English and British English in the classroom is the most appropriate choice for English language learners.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study underscore the perception among English learners that English serves as a primary tool of global communication and a potent symbol of internationalization. A majority of interviewees view English as a lingua franca, a bridge language enabling cross-cultural communication between individuals from diverse linguistic backgrounds (Cappuzzo, 2024). This perspective aligns with previous studies on the role of English in facilitating global interactions, where English's use as a second or foreign language in numerous countries is seen as a means to participate in the global community (Ishikawa, 2019; Zein et al., 2020). The adoption of English as a global language due to globalization has not only allowed for broader international interactions but has also given rise to diverse English varieties, commonly referred to as world Englishes. This discussion will explore how English functions as a cultural and linguistic intermediary, the influence of globalization and cultural identity on language, and learners' preferences and perceptions of standard English varieties.

English as a Cultural and Linguistic Bridge

English's role as a lingua franca emphasizes its function as a tool that fosters communication across cultures and languages, allowing individuals to navigate interactions on both personal and professional levels. One participant illustrated this sentiment by describing how English has become indispensable to cross-cultural exchanges, stating, "English has become a global language due to globalization. It has a significant impact on our development… With the spread of English, communication between people from different countries has been greatly facilitated. The existence of

various English varieties further contributes to the worldwide dissemination of the language." This viewpoint reflects an understanding of English not merely as a foreign language but as a crucial medium that enables individuals to share ideas, conduct business, and build relationships across borders (Huo, 2020).

Moreover, world Englishes embody a range of cultural and linguistic nuances unique to each region, reflecting the cultural contexts and local characteristics embedded within English usage. These variations support a broader interpretation of English, enabling speakers to incorporate their unique expressions, idioms, and accents, further solidifying English as an inclusive global language that adapts to its speakers' diverse needs (Bilal & Shahid, 2023). In doing so, English serves as a language that unites people while respecting cultural diversity, showing that language can be both a unifying and diversifying force in global contexts (House, 2018).

The Role of Globalization in Shaping World Englishes

The findings also indicate that students associate the rise of world Englishes with the process of globalization. As globalization continues to intensify the interconnectedness of nations and communities, English has evolved as the preferred medium of interaction in international affairs, education, and popular culture. The process has encouraged the development of multiple English varieties that reflect the cultural and linguistic nuances of specific regions, which aligns with theories of language adaptation in response to social and political forces (Baker & Sangiamchit, 2021; D'Angelo & Gil, 2020; Kirkpatrick, 2021). This adaptation supports the idea that language, particularly a global language like English, will naturally evolve to include variations that mirror the cultures of its users (Jenkins & Leung, 2022; Matsuda & Friedrich, 2023).

An interesting observation here is that English language learners do not merely adopt a language but engage with a version of English that incorporates local linguistic elements, resulting in distinct varieties like Indian English or Chinese English, among others. A student commented on the impact of cultural integration on language learning: "When learning English, it is important to not only focus on the language itself, but also on the cultures associated with it. This is especially true in countries like China, where speaking English will inevitably blend with Chinese culture." This insight reinforces the role of cultural background in shaping language acquisition and use, as speakers bring their cultural experiences and expressions into the language, thereby enriching it. Cultural contexts, therefore, not only impact language structure but also influence the ways people interpret and express ideas, further diversifying English as it spreads globally.

Cultural Identity and the Role of Local English Varieties

Another essential aspect of the discussion is the relationship between cultural identity and English language use. Language is a reflection of one's cultural identity, encompassing traditions, values, and customs, which are deeply embedded within linguistic choices. When speakers of English from different cultural backgrounds engage in communication, their distinct identities are inevitably reflected in their speech patterns, accents, and vocabulary. As one participant mentioned, "When my friend stays in China, they speak English based on their accents, not following the standardized accents." This statement highlights the ways in which non-native English speakers often incorporate their cultural identities into their English speech, creating unique varieties that may not align with standard English norms (Baker, 2018; Seidlhofer, 2017; McKenzie, 2019).

These adaptations emphasize the potential of English to serve as a tool for self-expression rather than simply a means of adhering to standardized rules. Language learners thus may choose to retain certain aspects of their native phonetics or syntax as they become more proficient in English, reinforcing their cultural backgrounds within the global language. This phenomenon has been well-documented in studies that explore cultural identity in multilingual speakers, where the adoption of English does not diminish but rather reinforces a speaker's cultural identity (Phillipson, 2018).

Preferences for Standard English Varieties

Despite recognizing the legitimacy of various English varieties, many participants still displayed a strong preference for American and British English, viewing them as the "ideal" standards for learning and imitation. This preference appears to stem from familiarity, attractiveness, and perceived social prestige. In the survey, American and British English were often described as "familiar," "easy to pronounce," "attractive," and "cool," indicating a socio-cultural bias that favors these varieties over other world Englishes (Archer, 2022).

This inclination towards standard English varieties can be attributed to multiple factors, including exposure to American and British media, the influence of these varieties in educational settings, and societal perceptions that link standard English with professional or social status (Kalaja & Barcelos, 2024). Learners, therefore, might feel that mastering these varieties enhances their linguistic identity, making them more recognizable and respected in global contexts. However, this preference may also suggest a limited awareness of other world Englishes, where the emphasis on standardized forms overshadows the diversity of English varieties that are equally valid and functional.

Additionally, Matsuda and Friedrich (2023) discussed how societal attitudes contribute to the perception of these varieties as more attractive and prestigious, influencing learners' choices. These findings suggest that while learners acknowledge the legitimacy of various English forms, there remains a strong inclination towards American and British English, driven by exposure, educational practices, and societal perceptions. For instance, a 2021 study by Baker and Sangiamchit found that learners often favor these standard varieties due to their widespread use in media and education, which enhances their perceived prestige and familiarity. Similarly, Jenkins and Leung (2022) highlighted that educational systems frequently prioritize American and British English, reinforcing their status as ideal models for learners.

Challenges in Accepting Non-Standard Varieties

One of the challenges emerging from the study is the hesitation among some students to fully embrace non-standard English varieties, despite acknowledging their existence. While students are generally aware of varieties such as Indian English or Singapore English, they tend to feel less confident in using or accepting these forms as legitimate standards (Hsu, 2019). This reluctance may stem from a lack of exposure or understanding of how these varieties function and their role in international contexts (Yunhua & Budiman, 2024; Isbell & Crowther, 2022; Wang, Ahn, Kim, & Lin-Siegler, 2018). As noted in the interview findings, limited familiarity with varieties like "Chinglish" or "Inglish" often leads students to default to standard varieties as a safer or more reliable option in communication (Yoestara, & Wahyuni, 2022).

Furthermore, this preference may indicate an implicit bias favoring Inner Circle varieties, possibly due to the perception that these varieties are more "authentic" or prestigious (Zhang, 2021; Tajeddin & Pakzadian, 2020). For language educators, this poses a challenge in broadening students' perspectives to appreciate English as a pluralistic language that does not require conformity to a single standard (Coelho & Ortega, 2020). The findings suggest the need for greater exposure to world Englishes in educational curricula to help students develop a more inclusive understanding of English, enabling them to communicate effectively across cultural and linguistic divides.

CONCLUSSION

The study reveals that students generally hold positive attitudes towards varieties of English. They recognize the importance of English for international communication. However, their knowledge of different English varieties is limited. Despite

acknowledging the existence of many varieties, they prefer to learn standardized American English and British English. Thus, the findings highlight a complex relationship between language, culture, and identity within the context of English as a global language. The interview results shed light on students' mixed attitudes towards different English varieties. While they have heard of Chinese English and Indian English, their lack of exposure prevents them from understanding what these varieties are like. By acknowledging the diversity within English, educators can help students recognize the legitimacy of different varieties, fostering an inclusive mindset that values linguistic diversity and prepares students for real-world communication in a globalized society.

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