

HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS' PERCEPTION AND ATTITUDE TOWARDS WORLD ENGLISHES: STUDY CASES IN LHOKSEUMAWE CITY, INDONESIA

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ABSTRACT

This research is aimed to explore the perceptions and teaching practices of senior high school English teachers in Lhokseumawe City, Aceh, Indonesia, regarding the concept of World Englishes (WE). This study use a qualitative method that the data were collected through semi-structured interviews and document analysis. The sample of this research involves five English teachers from different senior schools in in Lhokseumawe. The data collected through semi-structured interviews and document analysis were analyzed qualitatively. The results indicate that although teachers recognize the existence of various English varieties, their comprehension of the theoretical and pedagogical principles underlying World Englishes is still limited. Most teachers continue to rely on inner circle varieties especially American and British English as the dominant teaching models, citing factors such as curriculum restrictions, insufficient exposure to global English varieties, and students' relatively low proficiency levels. Consequently, the practical application of World Englishes in classroom instruction remains minimal. The study suggests that targeted professional development programs are essential to strengthen teachers' sociolinguistic awareness and pedagogical skills in addressing English variation. Gradually incorporating non-native English varieties into classroom materials could foster more inclusive, realistic, and globally oriented English teaching practices in Indonesia.

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INTRODUCTION

In Indonesia, English functions as a foreign language and has been taught as a compulsory subject across school levels. Traditionally, English teaching has referred to native-speaker models, particularly American and British English, as reflected in curriculum, teaching materials, and assessments. However, the globalization and increasing engagement in international communication have changed the way English language is used as it is no longer considered as the sole property of its native speakers. It

has developed into various local varieties, and is now widely used by non-native speakers around the world. This phenomenon has led to the emergence of what is known as World Englishes (Kachru, 1985; Kirkpatrick, 2007).

Kachru's model of World Englishes has put English as a global language meaning that it has extended beyond the Inner Circle (native models) to also include Outer Circle, where English serves as a second language, and Expanding Circle where English functions as a foreign language. This phenomenon has given rise to the diverse linguistic landscapes that position English a primary medium of international communication.

World Englishes is the idea that different groups of people use English in diverse ways. Malaysian English, Singaporean English, Nigerian English, Chinese English, and many others are examples of these varieties. These varieties demonstrate that English can serve as an effective medium of communication among individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds, notwithstanding differences in grammar or pronunciation. The rise of these Englishes challenges the idea of "native-speakerism," which claims that Inner Circle Englishes such as American English are the only acceptable models.

Sharifian & Sadeghpour (2020) argue that *World Englishes* play a very important role in practical areas such as intercultural communication and English language teaching. Incorporating *World Englishes* into English language teaching may enhance learners' intercultural communicative competence, preparing them to actively interact with both native and non-native speakers globally. Matsuda (2003) states that incorporating World Englishes concept in the classroom is not an easy task. However, she believes that, in the future, this approach can help people develop better perspective on English as an international language.

In Indonesia, World Englishes concept has not been fully integrated in the classroom context. This might happen because some teachers are still influenced by the native-speaker norms. Moreover, teachers are bound to curriculum demands and use American or British English as their references for teaching and conducting assessments (Permana & Rahma, 2024). Some researchers have examined the teachers' awareness on World Englishes (For example Juwariyah, 2022) where they highlight the constraints in the implementation of World Englishes concept in classroom including limited training for the teachers and the issue in accessing authentic teaching materials.

Many researchers such as Zacharias, 2003; Çepni & Çepni, 2024; Suminar & Gunawan, 2024; Hartono, 2025; Fadillah & Gunawan, 2025 have conducted some studies on World Englishes. However, their research mainly focuses on the perceptions and

teaching practices of preservice teachers or instructors at the university levels, or students. There have been only a few studies that focus on high school teachers, especially those who teach in smaller cities. Rose et al. (2021) also support this view stating that there have been more studies on World Englishes or Global Englishes in higher education than in junior or senior high schools.

This study investigates how senior high school English teachers in Lhokseumawe City, Aceh, perceive and integrate World Englishes concept into their teaching practices. Furthermore, this research seeks to answer the following questions: (1) What is the level of teachers' understanding of World Englishes? (2) What is teachers' perception of the non-native varieties of English? and (3) How do the teachers integrate the concept of World Englishes into classroom teaching practice?

These questions need to be addressed, as high school teachers play an important role in shaping students' linguistic attitudes. By encouraging students to develop a positive attitude towards the diversity of English, it is expected that they can learn the language more comfortably without worrying about nonstandard forms and become better prepared for global communication.

This study is important as it can contribute to the future research in English teaching especially in Expanding Circle contexts such as Indonesia, where English is learned as a foreign language. Furthermore, this research focuses on the teaching practices in schools in less cosmopolitan area in Indonesia, where resources and teacher development programs are limited, while the need to adapt with global development is increasing. It is vital to understand teachers' views on the World Englishes concept as this understanding can inform curriculum development and help design the suitable trainings programs, such as seminars and workshops, to enhance the sociolinguistic awareness and pedagogical approach for integrating World Englishes concept into the teaching.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative case study method to investigate the perceptions, attitudes, and teaching practices of senior high school English teachers in Lhokseumawe City, Aceh, Indonesia, regarding the concept of World Englishes (WE). The research design was considered to capture participants' experiences, attitudes, and beliefs within their natural teaching contexts and it does not rely on the strength of data and statistical analysis, but rather on the description of the data (Creswell, 2013; Rianto, 2020). The research was conducted in Lhokseumawe. Five (5) English teachers from various schools

were intentionally chosen based on their teaching experience, involvement in English pedagogy, and readiness to share professional insights. All participants possessed over ten years of teaching experience and were aged between 35 and 50 years and all of them were female. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, document analysis of lesson materials, and an extensive literature review.

Miles and Huberman's (1994) interactive model were used for data analysis, which included data reduction, data display, and drawing conclusions. Coding, thematic categorization, and triangulation were also used to make sure the results were valid. The process included reviewing the literature, conducting fieldwork, transcribing, coding, analyzing, and synthesizing the data to answer the research questions. This methodological framework facilitated the study's examination of how teachers in Lhokseumawe interpret and apply the concept of World Englishes and its pedagogical ramifications.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

1. Teachers' Understanding on the World Englishes Concept

This research reveals that most teachers showed a partial understanding of the World Englishes concept. As the teachers were aware that English is used differently in different areas, only a few were able to describe clearly the theoretical foundation of World Englishes as proposed by Kachru. In general, the informants recognized that English has various varieties. However, some of them still considered native models such as British or American English as the only "acceptable" forms to be taught and learned.

Interview data further demonstrated that the level of awareness among English teachers in senior high schools in Lhokseumawe City regarding the term World Englishes varied considerably. Some informants mentioned that they were familiar with the term World Englishes; however, others had never heard of the concept until they received the letter from the researchers inviting them participate in the study.

One teacher said that that she heard about varieties within the English language, but only in terms of accent and vocabulary, and that her knowledge of the concept was very limited. She stated:

"I know that there are other varieties of English besides American English. But I do not really understand the detailed differences". (Interview with T1, September 17, 2025)

Another teacher said that she had only learned about the term World Englishes after receiving the research assignment letter. However, she has had prior knowledge on non-varieties of English.

“I just heard the term *World Englishes* when I received the invitation letter to take part in this research. After reading the research topic and noticing the term, I searched for information about World Englishes on the internet. However, I was already familiar with other English varieties such as Indian English” (Interview with T3, September 19, 2025)

Based on the above findings, it can be concluded that the term World Englishes remains a new concept among the high school teachers. For those who have heard the term before, their understanding of it is still considered superficial. This is because its sociolinguistic and pedagogical aspects have not yet been incorporated into their professional knowledge.

Matsuda's (2012) study showed that many teachers knew about different types of English, but only a few had a deep understanding of the World Englishes paradigm in terms of theory or teaching. They may not be sure how to use the idea effectively in the classroom because their knowledge is limited.

Another reason some teachers are not familiar with the term World Englishes is that, at present, the English varieties taught in schools are limited to either American or British English. As a result, many teachers consider learning other English varieties irrelevant, since these are not explicitly included in the national curriculum or classroom materials. Consequently, exposure to various English varieties is limited, as teachers tend to conform to native-models.

This situation exemplifies what Kirkpatrick (2014) characterizes as the predominance of native-speaker ideology in numerous Asian educational contexts. He stresses that even though many people in Asia speak different kinds of English (World Englishes or Asian Englishes), only a small number of teachers and policymakers really understand the World Englishes framework in a theoretical or pedagogical way. Because of this, there is still a strong and mostly unquestioned focus on Inner Circle norms.

Teachers who had heard of the term World Englishes tended to interpret it only as a visible linguistic phenomenon. They perceived World Englishes as being synonymous with variations in accent, intonation, or vocabulary. However, such an understanding does not yet reach the broader theoretical framework of World Englishes. In the literature, the concept of World Englishes acknowledges that English is now a global language, meaning that it no longer belongs to a particular circle namely the Inner Circle. The

teachers interviewed generally had not yet arrived at this level of understanding, and their perspectives remained largely influenced by the traditional paradigm that positions Standard English (American or British) as the only valid reference.

This limited understanding may be influenced by the lack of opportunities for teachers to participate in seminars or training related to applied linguistics, as well as limited access to recent academic literature. One teacher even emphasized:

“I usually focus only on the curriculum. We teach according to what is required by the curriculum. As for theories like *World Englishes*, we rarely receive any specific information or training about them. I really look forward to trainings on World Englishes ” (Interview with T4, September 19, 2025)

The lack of understanding revealed in this study influences teaching practices. Teachers who possess only a limited understanding of World Englishes—or are not familiar with the concept at all—may cause students to miss the opportunity to learn that the English language is actually diverse and has various distinctive features.

Awareness of such diversity is crucial in preparing students for cross-cultural communication in the modern global era. It is important for teachers to develop their capacities through professional development program, such as seminars, training sessions, or workshops aimed at strengthening their ability to integrate the concept of World Englishes into classroom teaching. They should also equip themselves with sufficient knowledge and skills related to this concept. Teachers need to understand that World Englishes is not only about differences in accents, but also cover broader aspects requiring them to enhance their capacity to achieve the goal of improving their students’ intercultural communication competence.

According to the interview results, English teachers at Lhokseumawe City's senior high schools knew that there are English accents and dialects other than American and British English. They knew that English is spoken all over the world and that it has many accents, such as Indian English, Singaporean English, and Chinese English. This understanding demonstrate that teachers are actually aware that English has become a global language influenced by local contexts.

However, this awareness has not directly integrated into classroom practices. Teachers tend to regard non-native English varieties merely as supplementary knowledge for themselves rather than as materials that should be transferred to students. This may be due to limited access to teaching resources that feature accent diversity or to curriculum pressures that emphasize specific standards.

Teachers generally had conservative views on non-native accents. Although they were aware of their existence, but they did not teach them directly in class. For example, when choosing listening materials and speaking exercises, American and British English were still the main focus of classroom practices.

This finding is in line with Jenkins' (2009) view on English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), which stresses how important it is to understand that people speak different accents when they talk to each other around the world. But this study found that teachers were still not sure about directly introducing non-native accents. There were a few reasons for this hesitation. For example, there were not any teaching materials that showed different accents, and teachers were worried that students might have trouble understanding. Also, the national curriculum still focused on American and British English as the main points of reference.

So, even though teachers know that there are different accents, they usually do not take any actions to address them. They would rather focus on what students really need to learn standard English than on exposing them to different types of non-native accents. This attitude shows that teachers are practical when it comes to meeting the needs of the curriculum, but it could also make it harder for students to understand how global communication works.

Interviews with the teachers also revealed that most of the students were not familiar with English model beyond American and British English. However, some highly motivated students showed a different attitude. Teacher respondents T1, T2, and T5 reported that several students independently exposed themselves to global English varieties through digital media such as YouTube videos, podcasts, or films. Through these platforms, they became acquainted with non-native accents such as Indian English or Chinese English. In other words, students who engage in independent learning are more likely to be open to the diversity of global English.

“It is our students who are more frequently exposed to different varieties of English through social media, movies, and online interactions, and they are often the ones who ask teachers about the differences they notice. At that point, we take the opportunity to introduce the concept of English as a global language, explaining that English is not spoken in just one uniform way but exists in multiple forms”. (Interview with T2, 17 September 2025)

This phenomenon shows that there is a difference between what teachers know and what students go through. Although teachers know that there are different accents, they do not discuss them in class. Students, on the other hand, only hear non-native accents

when they go out of school and look for them. As a result, students' knowledge of the diversity of English is limited and largely depends on individual effort they put into learning.

These results highlight the need for pedagogical training that encourages teachers to be open to using a variety of accents in their teaching. If teachers were more knowledgeable and adept in this domain, it would facilitate students in perceiving diverse perspectives and enhance their ability to communicate with individuals from various cultures in an increasingly globalized context. To help students get used to the idea that there are different varieties of English, teachers can start by giving them simple audio or written texts produced by non-native English speakers.

2. The implementation of World Englishes concept in Learning

The results of the interviews with the teachers inform that English teachers in senior high schools across Lhokseumawe City teach English with the heavy emphasis put on two popular varieties of English (American English and British English). All teaching materials such as listening audios or conversational examples use native speaker models, especially American English.

One of the informants (T1) confirmed this, stating that the teaching materials used in her class are mostly in American English, although British English is sometimes used as an alternative.

“So far, we only teach American or British English in class because that’s how the curriculum is designed.” (Interview with T1, September 17, 2025).

In addition to issues with the curriculum and resources, students' language skills are a big problem for the use of World Englishes. Informants 3 and 4 (T3 and T4) say that most of the students still have trouble with basic English skills like grammar, vocabulary, and listening. Teachers believe that it is important to work on students' basic skills before showing them the different English accents or dialects from other countries.

Informant 4 (T4) informs that teaching World Englishes to students at this point may make learning harder for those who are already having trouble with the main materials. Teachers believe that enhancing students' motivation to learn English should take precedence before exposing them to the more complex concept of English varieties around the world.

“Our students' English skills are still not very good. They are still having trouble with the basics, let alone learning about other varieties of English. So, for now, we want to get them excited about learning English. We

haven't yet talked about the idea of World Englishes. (Interview with T4, September 19, 2025)

This statement confirms that teachers tend to adjust their teaching strategies to address the needs of their students. In other words, teachers are aware of the existence of World Englishes, but sometime its application is not suitable to the current classroom context. This demonstrates a disparity between teachers' awareness of the diversity of English and the reality in the classroom practices, which still rely on American and British English.

From a theoretical standpoint, Kachru's (1985) model of the *Three Circles of English*, the findings of this study indicate that English language teaching in Lhokseumawe's high schools still predominantly focuses on the Inner Circle. Varieties from the Outer and Expanding Circles have not yet found their place in the classroom.

This condition clearly shows a lack of ability to teach English in a way that reflects the global reality. In real international communication, people do not interact only with those from the Inner Circle countries; they also communicate with people who do not speak English as their first language but use it as a lingua franca. Jenkins (2009) stresses that differences in accents and ways of speaking English as a lingua franca should not be seen as problems, but as facts that need to be dealt with in the classroom.

The interview results, on the other hand, show that some teachers still do not consider that introducing World Englishes is a priority. Their reasoning is usually practical: students continue to struggle with basic skills, teachers are required to follow the curriculum, and there is a lack of suitable teaching materials. This position shows a realistic way of setting priorities, but also reveals that schools are not yet ready to prepare students for global communication in new and diverse contexts.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results and discussion, this study concludes that teachers are aware that English is used differently across countries, but they have limited knowledge of the theories and methods underlying World Englishes. Most people still think of American and British English as the main standards of English, and this view is supported by national curriculum guidelines, standardized tests, and the fact that most teaching materials are based on native speakers.

The findings of the research also revealed that the application of World Englishes in classroom instruction has yet to be realized. Teachers' awareness of linguistic diversity

has not directly implemented into pedagogical practice due to some constraints including limited resources, lack of trainings, and students' low proficiency level. Consequently, exposure to non-native varieties of English remains limited, and opportunities to raise students' intercultural communicative competence are restricted. To address this issue, English language education in Indonesia needs to adopt a more inclusive perspective that reflects the global situation of English at the present day. Teacher workshops and curriculum reforms should encourage teachers to use examples of different English varieties into their classrooms. This will help prepare students to communicate with people from around the world and to view English as a living language used globally.

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