



The impacts of awareness of global Englishes on learners' attitudes toward language variation

Naratip Jindapitak 

(naratip.jin@psu.ac.th)

Prince of Songkla University, Thailand

Adisa Teo 

(adisa.s@psu.ac.th)

Prince of Songkla University, Thailand

Kristof Savski 

(kristof.s@psu.ac.th)

Prince of Songkla University, Thailand

Abstract

Although English language variation is an inevitable and a natural linguistic phenomenon, language attitudes research has suggested that varieties other than the mainstream native-speaker standards usually receive unfavorable social evaluations. This may reflect the existence of prejudices and discrimination against speakers of many Englishes. Global Englishes literature, however, offers a new pluralistic lens to examine English, providing key implications for language education. While practical proposals have recently been made for how this lens may be used in the context of English teaching, there is as yet only sporadic evidence of how English learners respond to efforts to transform attitudes. This study aimed to examine how a group of Thai learners of English responded to a 9-week global Englishes awareness raising program. Findings obtained through classroom observations, analysis of an online chatroom and interviews suggest that learners developed an increased awareness of the global role of English and experienced a critical reorientation of beliefs about English language variation, gaining enhanced tolerance. These findings point to the importance of teaching English beyond prescribed linguistic skills and helping English learners a pluralistic view of English through the analysis of critical issues related to the global spread of English.

Share and cite

Jindapitak, N., Teo, A., & Savski, K. (2022). The impacts of awareness of global Englishes on learners' attitudes toward language variation. *Electronic Journal of Foreign Language Teaching [e-FLT]*, 19(1), 20–34. <https://doi.org/10.56040/jtse1912>

1 Introduction

In language attitudes research since 1960s, social-psychologists have been interested in understanding the relationship between language and its ability to carry many social meanings (McKenzie & Gilmore, 2017). English has been the primary focus in major attitudes studies due to its role (Crystal, 1997) and its high level of variation beyond the standard varieties. The pluralistic status of English has captured social-psychologists' and applied linguists' interest in investigating people's attitudes toward its different forms throughout the world. In addition, as attitudes refer to "social indicators of changing beliefs" (Baker, 1992, p. 9), it is particularly interesting to examine whether people's language attitudes reflect the changing profiles of English today. In fact, research involving listeners' attitudes toward English language variation has generally suggested that whether consciously or unconsciously, listeners tend to evaluate regional native speaker (NS) varieties of English and NNS varieties of English less favorably than the standard or mainstream NS varieties. In other words, the listeners tend to broadly associate positive social traits (attributes) to NS varieties, while ascribing stigmatized or negative social traits to (non-native speaker) NNS or regional NS Englishes (McKenzie & Gilmore, 2017).

Empirical evidence of people's social evaluations of English language variation has led to the question how such attitudes can be transformed through promotion of tolerance. In particular, there have been calls for the need to raise language users' awareness of global Englishes and the socio-linguistic, sociopolitical and pedagogical issues around them, thus preparing language users to engage in English as a lingua franca (ELF) communication in the 21st century. Language users, who are particularly likely to communicate with interlocutors using forms of English departing from the NS standards, can benefit from awareness of the variable nature of English, thus forming a more pluralistic view toward different forms of English (Buckingham, 2014) as they reflect on how their attitudes potentially impact on language use, language learning and communication (Galloway, 2013; Ke & Cahyani, 2014). Despite extensive theoretical discussions, however, such a pluralistic vision of English still remains largely excluded from actual ELT practices (Matsuda, 2017). By and large, many ELT practitioners seemingly lack concrete knowledge concerning how to approach curricular innovation in line with the global role of English (Matsuda, 2012). When it comes to the question of whether language learners' awareness of global Englishes can enhance tolerance for English language variation and promote critical (re)orientation of beliefs toward English language variation, relatively little is known in applied linguistics. To fill this gap, this study attempted to investigate how the knowledge and awareness of global Englishes could influence entrenched negative attitudes toward variation in English among a group of Thai learners of English.

2 Enhancing language learners' tolerance for English language variation

Global Englishes scholars have put forward various pedagogical proposals to integrate global Englishes components in ELT. One proposal which has received significant interest in the literature is to raise English learners' awareness of global Englishes, which is defined by Galloway and Rose (2015) as the "teaching of issues surrounding Global Englishes in order to raise learners' awareness of the global spread of and use of English, and to encourage them to think critically about the language" (p. 205). The main aim of raising awareness in this manner is to build learners' understanding of the systematic nature of linguistic differences (Pedrazzini, 2015). With the focus on awareness of linguistic diversity, the language is approached from the perspective of linguistic nonconformity (Widdowson, 1994), allowing learners to view language not "as a set of fixed conventions to conform to, but as an adaptable resource for making meaning" (Widdowson, 1994, p. 384). What raising awareness of global Englishes also entails is encouraging learners to talk critically and analytically about language and involves them in an ongoing discovery of English as a complex and dynamic phenomenon rather than an exploration of English as a fixed body of unchallenged truths (Svalberg, 2007).

Increased discussions of the implications of global Englishes in ELT have led applied linguists and educators to investigate the possible influence global Englishes instructions may have on learners' attitudes. Although there has been a relative dearth of research investigating this issue, available work has suggested that global Englishes instructions play an important role in the development of awareness of the plurality of English. For instance, in Galloway's (2013) study, a global Englishes content-based course helped Japanese English learners develop more favorable attitudes toward their own English variety and become more open-minded about English teachers from NNS countries. Also in Japan, findings from Rose and Galloway (2017) suggested that after being engaged in a debate activity using Singapore's controversial "Speak Good English Movement", Japanese English learners were able to critically challenge the NS episteme in ELT and viewed Singlish as a legitimate English variety. In another study, Chang's (2014) empirical attempt to bring global Englishes discussions to an ELT classroom revealed that Taiwanese English learners appreciated the value of English language variation and became more aware of the power adhered to different English varieties. Hong Kong English learners who participated in Sung's (2018) out-of-class ELF communication activity reported to have gained more appreciation of the diversity of English and become more aware of the multiplicity of English outside of classroom as well as questioned the relevance of NS norms, especially when ELF communication is concerned. Also recently, Prabjandee (2019) reported several positive changes in in-service teachers' attitudes after participating in a global Englishes language teaching workshop in Thailand. They were reported to be more critical about the notion of English ownership and rely less on NS norms in ELT.

While major studies which attempted to raise awareness of teachers and learners' (English majors') of global Englishes have resulted in positive learning experiences among participants, especially improved tolerance for English language variation, many of these have involved students enrolled in English language major or teacher education programs. In contrast, we know much less about how students of other backgrounds, particularly those for whom specialized knowledge of sociolinguistics is not relevant, respond to global Englishes instruction, and whether it is as powerful in enhancing their tolerance for English language variation as it appears in the case of English majors. These learners represent the majority of English learners in the world, and it is vital to explore their voices (He & Miller, 2011). Furthermore, since it is most likely that these learners will become users of English for lingua franca communication in their future careers, knowledge and awareness of global Englishes appears to be especially useful for their future uses of English.

ELF is particularly relevant to language education in Thailand, the broad context where this research was conducted, considering the progressively increasing rates of human mobility, information exchange and trade among different Asian nations. To cope with the high volume of trade and mobility (Thailand presently receives the second highest number of tourists (with 32.58 million in 2018, according to World Bank [<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/ST.INT.ARVL?locations=TH>]), the Thai educational system has recently placed much focus on improving English proficiency on a broad scale, despite the fact that English, until recently, had little role in the nation, which had avoided being integrated into the British Empire in a political sense. In parallel with demands for greater proficiency, there has also been recognition of the fact that Thailand is considered a promising context learners must gain awareness of global Englishes in order to be effective on the global stage. With the commencement of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), Thais have encountered an increasing number of global Englishes varieties and speakers. In fact, many global Englishes and ELF studies conducted in Thailand (e.g., Buripakdi, 2012; Jindapitak, 2015; Boonsuk & Ambele, 2019) have pointed to the same direction: an urgent need for ELT in Thailand to respond to the changing sociolinguistic realities of English by preparing English learners to deal with the linguistic diversity and communication involving speakers of diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

3 Methodology

The project employed a mixed method design to examine how the English learners perceived English language variation and the impacts of global Englishes awareness raising on their attitudes toward English language variation. We first conducted a survey study using different types of questionnaire to explore their attitudes toward English language variation before conducting a nine-week global Englishes awareness raising program and collecting data about its impact.

3.1 Survey of language attitudes

3.1.1 Participants

The attitudinal survey involved 306 Thai undergraduate students of mixed academic disciplines (non-English majors), genders and years of study from a major government university in southern Thailand. The participants were recruited by convenient samplings, with the help of my colleagues from various faculties.

3.1.2 Data collection

The survey employed different techniques for measuring the participants' attitudes toward English language variation, including the verbal guise technique (VGT), Likert-scale questionnaire, multiple-choice questionnaire and scenario-based questionnaire. In the VGT task, the participants listened to eight speech samples of educated female English speakers from various countries, including USA, England, China, The Philippines, India, Korea, Malaysia and Thailand (all downloaded from the International Dialects of English Archive: <http://www.dialectsarchive.com>). The participants listened to and evaluated the speakers on 10 six-point Likert-scale statements, which elicited judgments regarding speaker's status (competence) and solidarity. The participants also completed a questionnaire with 15 items, targeting three main issues: the intricacies of the global spread of English and existence of global Englishes (8 items); key sociolinguistic and sociopolitical concerns in global Englishes (4 items); and English language learning in light of global Englishes (3 items). The participants were also asked to provide background information and indicate if they were interested in participating in the awareness raising program. Altogether, the participants spent approximately 60 minutes completing the survey.

3.1.3 Data analysis

The VGT elicited participants' implicit attitudinal responses, while responses obtained from the questionnaire were more explicit. These two types of responses were cross-validated to achieve adequate interpretation of findings (He & Miller, 2011). To ascertain whether the ratings of varieties of English on the VGT were significantly different from each other, a repeated-measure analysis of variance (ANOVA) was computed. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze data from questionnaire items with the Likert scale and multiple-choice format. Qualitative responses obtained from the open-ended questions were analyzed to find supporting information for the quantitative findings.

3.2 Awareness raising program

3.2.1 Participants

Although 121 participants indicated their interest in participating in the awareness raising program, this study recruited 25 students, a number considered appropriate for a discussion class. Three participants later dropped out, reducing the total number to 22. To achieve this mix, the participants were randomly recruited from different majors to make the class as much heterogeneous and dynamic as possible, although some were from the same majors.

3.2.2 *Program characteristics*

In this study, the 9-week global Englishes awareness raising program was neither a required course nor a tutoring class for language skills but rather a series of informal discussion sessions on global Englishes-related topics. The program was developed based on ideas and proposals put forward in global Englishes and ELF literature (e.g., Galloway, 2013; Galloway & Rose, 2015; Rose & Galloway, 2017; Chang, 2014; Bayyurt & Sifakis, 2017; Marlina, 2018; Matsuda, 2017). The participants were involved in a series of tasks which enabled them to discuss several global Englishes-related concerns, grouped into three inter-related modules, which paralleled the main areas surveyed. The modules covered the intricacies of the global spread of English and existence of global Englishes (Module A), key sociolinguistic and sociopolitical concerns in global Englishes (Module B) and English language learning in light of global Englishes (Module C) (a full description of the syllabus will be provided in Jindapitak, Teo and Savski (forthcoming)).

In module A, a set of tasks were developed with an aim to involve the English learners in a discussion on the global spread of English and global Englishes (Pedrazzini, 2015). Topics, such as the changing demographics of English, the globalization of English and phonological and lexicogrammatical variation of Englishes were included in the discussion. Such exposure can be a new exploration for many learners who may believe that that only standard English is applicable in ELF communication (Bayyurt & Sifakis, 2017). The learners' involvement in the discovery of global Englishes and awareness of the intricacies of English as a global lingua franca in this module aimed to ready them for more extensive topics to be discussed in the next module.

Module B consisted of a set of tasks aiming to raise the learners' awareness of deeper concerns in global Englishes. This module brought different sociolinguistic and sociopolitical issues surrounding global Englishes to the class, such as the ownership of English, standard language ideology, intelligibility and linguistic prejudice. The idea was to encourage the learners to relate these concerns to the previous module and to critically question taken-for-granted assumptions about English (Galloway & Rose, 2015). Additionally, attitudes expressed by the learners in the survey study (see above) were also brought to class for discussions, and the learners were prompted to think critically and make judgments about the issues in more depth.

Module C involved the English learners in discussions related to English language learning in light of global Englishes. Topics, such as the role of naiveness in English language learning and the role of global Englishes in English language learning were brought to the discussions. It was our attempt to encourage the English learners to relate their thoughts, views and understandings of the concepts learned in the first two modules to assumptions guiding English language learning practices (Ahn, 2015).

3.2.3 *Data collection*

Data were collected from researcher's field notes, chatroom messages and interviews. During face-to-face meetings (conducted by the first author), field notes were created while the participants completed activities and discussed questions related to each module. Apart from face-to-face meetings, an online chatroom was created (using the LINE app), moderated by the first author, to allow participants to reflect on the content of the modules. Questions related to global Englishes topics covered each week were sent to the chatroom, and participants were instructed to respond to the questions. All the messages in the chatroom were collected for analysis. Data were also collected through interviews with selected participants. Participants who provided interesting responses (needing more elaboration and examples) or unclear responses (needing confirmation) in both the classroom and the chatroom were contacted for interview, using Thai as a medium. The interviews were to be used to add depths to the findings obtained from the online chatroom and researcher

notes. Therefore, the interview served as a tool for both "checking" and "discovering" (Denscombe, 2003). Each interview lasted about 20-30 minutes.

3.2.4 Data analysis

Data were analyzed to identify emerging or salient themes or tentative categories using a coding system (Denscombe, 2003; Dornyei, 2007). First, in order to find keywords, phrases and sentences common amongst the participants, raw data were studied through repeated reading. The categorized codes were then compared to one another using a mind map for the purpose of arriving at a more profound understanding of emerging ideas (Brown & Peterson, 1997). Second, similar categories were clustered together to represent a broader label (Dornyei, 2007). Finally, themes were produced accompanied by a list of sub-themes and supporting quotes from different types of data (Saldana, 2009).

4 Findings

4.1 Survey findings

The initial analysis of the participants' implicit evaluations of the eight speakers in the VGT revealed the following patterns. When considering all the individual items together, results suggested that the participants held varied attitudes toward different speakers. AmE obtained the most positive evaluation, followed by BrE and MyE, with the mean scores being 4.82, 4.69 and 4.05, respectively. In fact, after the first three places, no speakers receive the mean score above 4.00. ThE comes fourth (3.96), having the mean score relatively close to that of FiE (3.93). ChE (3.74) was ranked sixth, followed by KoE (3.71), with InE rated lowest (3.27).

To find out whether the eight speakers were evaluated significantly differently from each other, a one-way repeated-measure analysis of variance (ANOVA) was computed using SPSS. The analysis showed a large significant effect in the participants' evaluations of the eight speakers, $F(7, 2128) = 163.64, p < .001 (p = .000), \eta^2 = 0.350$. A further post-hoc test was then analyzed to find out which pairs of speakers' mean scores reached significant difference. Based on Table 1, which reveals mean difference of each pair of speakers and (if it is significant at the .05 level), the following patterns emerge. First, the participants evaluated the two mainstream inner-circle speakers (AmE and BrE) significantly more favorably than the rest of the speakers; however, the difference between these two did not reach a significant difference. Secondly, while there was no significant difference between MyE, ThE and FiE, these three speakers were evaluated significantly more positively than the other NNS speakers: ChE, KoE and InE. Third, ChE and KoE were evaluated similarly. Finally, the significantly least favorable evaluation was shown toward InE, in comparison with the other speakers.

Table 1

Mean difference of each pair of speakers

	AmE	BrE	MyE	ThE	FiE	ChE	KoE	InE
AmE		.126 (.307)	.769* (.000)	.864* (.000)	.886* (.000)	1.082* (.000)	1.108* (.000)	1.547* (.000)
BrE	-.126 (.307)		.643* (.000)	.738* (.000)	.761* (.000)	.957* (.000)	.983* (.000)	1.421* (.000)
MyE	-.769* (.000)	-.643* (.000)		.095 (1.000)	.118 (1.000)	.314* (.000)	.340* (.000)	.778* (.000)
ThE	-.864* (.000)	-.738* (.000)	.095 (1.000)		.023 (1.000)	.219* (.001)	.245* (.000)	.683* (.000)

FiE	-.886* (.000)	-.761* (.000)	-.118 (1.000)	-.023 (1.000)		.196* (.033)	.222* (.014)	.660* (.000)
ChE	-1.082* (.000)	-.957* (.000)	-.314* (.000)	-.219* (.001)	-.196* (.033)		.026 (1.000)	.464* (.000)
KoE	-1.108* (.000)	-.983* (.000)	-.340* (.000)	-.245* (.000)	-.222* (.014)	-.026 (1.000)		.438* (.000)
InE	-1.547* (.000)	-1.421* (.000)	-.778* (.000)	-.683* (.000)	-.660* (.000)	-.464* (.000)	-.438* (.000)	

Based on estimated marginal means

*. The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

With regard to the participants' attitudes toward the global spread of English and global Englishes (Table 2), it was found that the majority of participants (72.8%) knew that the number of NNSs outnumbering that of NSs, and that the number of NS is not the reason why English is an international language (69.2%). The participants were aware of varieties of English other than American and British English (77.1%), and believed that people who do not speak English as their mother tongue will normally have noticeable English accents different from those of NSs (76.0%). While most (73.8%) believed that intelligibility in English is not conditioned by ability to speak with an absence of NNS accent, 68.5% of them indicated the belief that moving away from a NNS accent can lead to greater communication success. Surprisingly, although the majority (72.8%) accepted the use of Thai politeness particles ("kha" and "krub") in English, they seemed to disagree with similar innovation ("lah") in two outer-circle varieties, Singaporean English and Malaysian English (71.9%).

Table 2

Frequency and (percentage) of the participants indicate ng their level of agreement on the statements

Items	Levels of agreement					
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
1. There are more native speakers of English than non-native speakers of English.	19 (6.2%)	96 (31.5%)	107 (35.1%)	61 (20.0%)	17 (5.6%)	5 (1.6%)
2. English has become an international language because there are a lot of native English speakers in USA, UK, Australia, Canada and New Zealand.	18 (5.9%)	106 (34.8%)	87 (28.5%)	61 (20.0%)	30 (9.8%)	3 (1.0%)
3. There are varieties of English other than American and British English, such as Malaysian English, Singaporean English, Indian English, etc.	2 (0.7%)	21 (6.9%)	47 (15.4%)	82 (26.9%)	117 (38.4%)	36 (11.8%)
4. It is normal that people who do not speak English as a mother tongue will have a noticeable English accent different from a native-like accent.	5 (1.6%)	11 (3.6%)	57 (18.7%)	93 (30.5%)	84 (27.5%)	55 (18.0%)
5. When speakers get rid of non-native accents (e.g., Thai accent), they can be more successful in communication.	3 (1.0%)	16 (5.2%)	77 (25.2%)	115 (37.7%)	68 (22.3%)	26 (8.5%)
6. Intelligible English means ability to speak like a native speaker with an absence of a non-native English accent.	11 (3.6%)	90 (29.5%)	124 (40.7%)	55 (18.0%)	22 (7.2%)	3 (1.0%)
7. Thai people often mix Thai word with English, such as "Thank you kha"	5 (1.6%)	14 (4.6%)	64 (21.0%)	115 (37.7%)	58 (19.0%)	49 (16.1%)

and "How are you krub?". I think this use of English is acceptable.						
8. The use of "lah" as a sentence ending word in spoken English among Malaysians and Singaporeans (e.g., "It's okay lah", "I'll buy this lah", etc.) is unacceptable.	5 (1.6%)	20 (6.6%)	61 (20.0%)	149 (48.9%)	60 (19.7%)	10 (3.3%)

The following findings revealed how the participants reacted to sociolinguistic and sociopolitical concerns surrounding global Englishes (Table 3). First, it is clear that the majority of the participants believed that inner-circle speakers of English own the English language (76.1%), justifying their responses citing NS nations' history of English use and fluency of NSs. Second, similar percentages of participants considered outer-circle Englishes as non-standard (37.0%) and as appropriate for local use (36.1%). In their written responses, they seemed to associate these varieties with negative attributes (e.g., wrong, unnatural, accented non-native and broken). Third, the majority of participants (43.6%) believed that NNS accents refer to speakers' choices of speaking English, but they sound incorrect. Again, negative attributes were used to label NNS varieties. Fourth, the majority (55.1%) associated intelligible English with the ability to speak English clearly with a near NS-like English accent. They tended to base their reasons on the idea of NS being the ideal criterion measuring if a certain form of English is intelligible. For instance, one wrote, "The closer you are to a NS, the better your English will be".

Table 3

Percentage of the participants selecting options to complete the statements

Items	N (Percentage)
1. English belongs to...	
a. native speakers of English in America, Britain, Australia, Canada and New Zealand.	232 (76.1%)
b. people who use English as one of the official languages as in Singapore, Malaysia, India, etc.	2 (0.7%)
c. everyone who attempts to use it irrespective of his/her level of proficiency and nationality.	71 (23.3%)
d. other	0 (0%)
2. In some countries (e.g., Singapore, Malaysia, The Philippines and India) English is used as one of the official languages, and these English varieties differ from British and American English in terms of pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary. These types of English are considered...	
a. non-standard English and should be corrected.	113 (37.0%)
b. English appropriate for local use only.	110 (36.1%)
c. English in its own right which is acceptable and correct.	79 (25.9%)
d. other	3 (1.0%)
3. Accents of non-native English speakers can be referred to as....	
a. speakers' identity, and there's nothing wrong with them.	71 (23.3%)
b. speakers' inability to use English correctly.	91 (31.5%)
c. speakers' choices of speaking English, but they sound incorrect.	133 (43.6%)
d. other	10 (3.3%)
4. In your opinion, "intelligible English" means...	
a. ability to speak clearly although there is a presence of a non-native English accent.	98 (32.1%)
b. ability to speak English clearly with a near-native-like English accent.	168 (55.1%)
c. ability to speak like a native speaker with an absence of a non-native English accent	28 (9.2%)
d. other	11 (3.6%)

Analysis of the participants' attitudes toward English language learning in light of global Englishes (Table 4) revealed that more than half of the participants (51.1%) expressed a desire to be able to speak like a NS. Their typical reasons involve achieving a NS-like accent being the end goal of learning English and perceived linguistic demands of future careers. In the second scenario, more than half (52.8%) preferred an American teacher despite an irrelevant degree in ELT. Their shared reasons concern positive linguistic attributes and social status attributes general American or NS teachers hold, pedagogical competence and advantages of being a NS and intrinsic motivation. Third, a large number of the participants (80.3%) preferred a class featuring audio material with only NS accents. Consistent with teacher preference, many associated NS accents with positive linguistic and status (competence) values. Others articulated that they simply love/want to listen to NS accents, and that their end goal in learning English is to understand NSs.

Table 4

Percentage of the participants indicating preferences for English ability, teacher and class

Items	N (Percentage)
1. English ability preference	
Student A (able to speak just like a native speaker now)	156 (51.1%)
Student B (able to speak clearly now, but still has a L1 accent)	120 (39.3%)
Student C (able to speak good enough English with a L1 accent and sometimes has to repeat)	27 (8.9%)
Other	2 (0.7%)
2. English teacher preference	
Teacher A (Thai with a relevant degree in ELT)	105 (34.4%)
Teacher B (American <i>without</i> a relevant degree in ELT)	161 (52.8%)
Teacher C (Singaporean with a relevant degree in ELT)	32 (10.5%)
Other	7 (2.3%)
3. English class preference	
Class A (featuring audio material of NS accents)	245 (80.3%)
Class B (featuring audio material of ESL accents)	9 (3.0%)
Class C (featuring audio material of varieties of both NS and NNS accents)	51 (16.7%)
Other	0 (0.00%)

4.2 Awareness raising findings

In the first module (weeks 1-3), the participants were exposed to several English varieties, including some featuring phonological and lexico-grammatical features invented by NNSs. They appeared to be surprised that many such words and phrases, both familiar and unfamiliar, can now be called "English". While many participants were positive toward innovation, considering it a normal linguistic phenomenon that reflects the evolution of the English language, others were opposed, worrying that newly invented words and phrases may confuse NSs and cause breakdown in NS-NNS communication.

The participants seemed to have mixed opinions when asked if they accepted uses of English (pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar) differing from the NS standards, with the majority showing acceptance of NNS uses, with an option of using one of the NS norms as a linguistic benchmark as far as communicative success is concerned. The participants who strongly rejected NNS uses seemed to adhere strictly to the NS standards, emphasizing the ability to use English like a NS to sound more advanced, educated, correct and prestigious. For instance,

[...] It's very important to stay attached to a NS variety when you use English. [...] Not only does the ability to speak like a NS make you sound more correct, it also makes you feel like you're an advanced user of English" (Interview).

The picture of whether to accept NNS uses became clearer when asked whether NNS variation should be called a difference or an error. It was found that most participants associated NNS uses with linguistic deficit, as verbalized by the following participant: "...many NNSs speak English too slowly. I think it's a bit unnatural compared to the way NSs talk" (Researcher's note). It is interesting to note, however, that many participants, who had shown acceptance for NNS uses and were otherwise positive toward NNS innovation continued to see any variation departure from NS standards as an error. Previous English language learning experiences with an emphasis on the NS standards, assessments focusing on the standard NS English conformity and lack of credibility of NNS varieties were variously referred to as the participants justified their dismissal of NNS Englishes

In the second module (weeks 5-8), the participants examined sociolinguistic and sociopolitical concerns surrounding global Englishes. They first discussed the idea of standard English being driven by speakers' social backgrounds or social status. According to one participant, "*It's the people and society that make a particular variety sound better or more attractive than others. It's just like the way we judge people's appearance*" (Chatroom). Likewise, another participant noted that, "*RP is associated with the privileged upper class; therefore, it is a powerful variety... and people tend to value a powerful variety more than a non-prestigious variety*" (Interview).

The participants were led to discuss stereotypes associated with NS and NNS accents. They indicated that NS accents are generally associated with positive attributes, with NNS counterparts being labeled less positively. Some began to consider prejudiced reactions against accent differences unacceptable. One stated that, "*If you can speak like a NS, people may think you're highly educated, but if you hold a foreign accent, they may think the exact opposite. But, I don't think it's a good idea to judge the way people speak*" (Chatroom). They also discussed how prejudices are imbued in people's mind (including their own), especially when it comes to judgments of intelligibility of accent differences. Many participants argued that prejudices are the main factor affecting people's judgements of speeches. Specific in-class activities encouraging the participants to compare their subjective attitudes toward with actual comprehension of the four speakers with different accents (Iraqi, American, Nigerian and Vietnamese) were mentioned. They reflected that the activities allowed them to become aware of their own prejudices against accent differences. One remarked:

"For me, when I listened to these accents, I seemed to judge them unconsciously just like what I did in Activity 1, and then when I was asked to complete the audio scripts to check the comprehension of each speaker's speech in Activity 2, I came to know that oh I was prejudiced... I now understood why accents can hurt intelligibility" (Chatroom).

Despite disapproving of accent prejudices, some participants argued that sticking to a NS norm is a practical way to avoid discrimination and expressed a desire to have a NS accent when they speak due to social demands. One reacted:

"...actually, discrimination against somebody's accent is a bad thing. I wish it didn't happen to all English speakers... but if you can speak with a NS accent, people will stop treating you unfairly, and you will look credible and believable" (Interview).

The participants were asked if they agreed with the idea of NS being tied to particular nationalities or countries. It was found that nearly all the participants expressed disagreement with the idea. They also pointed out that nationality, accent and skin color should not count when defining who a NS is. Some of them admitted that they previously held the idea of NSs being tied to particular groups of speakers, as reflected by the following participant, "*Anyone can be a NS if he/she speaks English as a mother tongue. I previously thought that only people living in native-English speaking countries could be NSs*" (Chatroom). A few participants, however, maintained that although they did not like the idea of NSs being the sole owners of English, deep inside, they admittedly favored English speakers in the West to be labelled "owners of English".

It was also found that that most of the participants acknowledged NNS Englishes as varieties in their own right, with many additionally associating uses of NNS varieties with speakers' source of pride, solidarity, local creativities and ways to signal identities. One interestingly illustrated her account on the relationship between English and identity through how food from a particular culture is adapted to local tastes: *"When people use their own varieties, they may want to show their identities and show how they use the language locally creatively. For example, I love to eat Tomyam (Thai sour and spicy soup) ramen"* (Chatroom). She further elaborated that:

"...let's imagine that ramen were English. In India, they might create curry ramen, and here in Thailand, Tomyam ramen is creatively invented. It's a unique way to represent your culture. This is the same thing when English becomes Tenglish or Singlish..." (Interview).

The participants viewed the movie, *My Fair Lady* and were engaged in in-class discussions of important linguistic events in the movie. For instance, they were asked to react to Professor Higgins' statement, that "a woman who utters such depressing and disgusting noises has no right to be anywhere—no right to live". All of them expressed negative opinions stating that Higgins' speech reflected how ignorant and offensive he was, and that he was disrespectful of speakers' language use. For instance, one participant stated that *"[...] Higgins shaming Eliza for uttering poor English is totally awful... It shows that he doesn't accept variation or other ways of speaking English"* (Researcher's note). Many participants pointed out the fact that variation is inevitable and natural in language use, arguing why Higgins' stance on language is inaccurate or unconvincing. One, for instance, stated that, *"The words "depressing" and "disgusting" are too strong for me. If I were Eliza, I would tell him that he was not as educated as he appeared, using such strong words as a tool to hurt another's feeling"* (Interview).

Many of them mentioned that the activities enabled them to observe the potential power and violence of language use, realize the connection between variation in language use and social class, empathize with English speakers who are victims of linguistic prejudice and reflect on their own past attitudes toward varieties of English and their speakers. The following quotes illustrate some of the points mentioned by the participants:

"I've adjusted my mindset about English after I finished this lesson. I feel that I've been more tolerant for English language variation. Previously, the idea of attaching to a NS standard as much as possible always held me back. However, after watching My Fair Lady, I felt very much empathetic toward Eliza—if I were treated inhumanly like what she'd experienced, I'd feel very upset" (Chatroom).

"Before this, I held negative attitudes toward NNS Englishes, but after watching the movie and analyzing the news article "hateful note left at a Thai restaurant", I've felt differently toward variation. I have more empathy toward those prejudiced against their language use. I think of NNS Englishes in a more neutral way" (Chatroom).

The last module (week 9) engaged the participants in discussions related to English language learning in light of global Englishes. The participants were led to analyze several ELT commercials promoting NS teachers and when asked why NS teachers has been greatly appreciated by the society as can be seen in the commercials, many thought that white NSs or westerners have always been associated with positive social and cultural values. They also noted that this deeply grounded trend of beliefs has resulted in students and people in general wanting to sound like or be like them. One reflected that,

"[...] Westerners are likely to be perceived more positively. For instance, I remember watching a TV program asking a 5-year old kid about her future career, and her response was a great shock, as she replied, "I would like to have a western husband when I grow up" (Chatroom).

One, interestingly, responded to an immense craze for NS teachers from her discipline of study, marketing. Based on her fruitful analysis,

"Most people want to be able to speak like NSs. I was one of them too prior to joining this class. It's not surprising why NSs have appeared in many commercials. From a marketing perspective, such a campaign can attract a good deal of customers, so it looks like the business is profitable and successful. However, the product being advertised has to be in line with the components of ethical marketing. If the product doesn't live up to the claim, you're creating a misleading information to deceive customers" (Chatroom).

When asked how they felt studying English provided by a teacher with a NNS accent, the majority stated that they did not mind studying English with NNS teachers. In addition, teacher qualification and an opportunity to be exposed to English language variation were mentioned by many participants when they justified their preferences. One, for instance, argued, *"I'd like to learn [English] with good teachers no matter what accent they have. What's more important is that teachers know how to teach and have a relevant qualification"* (Chatroom). She additionally pointed out the importance of familiarizing with varieties of English for the sake of her future: *"I think now it's important to be familiar with varieties of English... It's important for our future career especially when we have to talk business with our international clients"* (Interview). These views contrasted directly with the preference of the vast majority of the participants, expressed in the questionnaire, for NS teachers, irrespective of qualifications.

Although some participants thought that good English teachers are not nation- or accent-bound, they preferred to be taught by qualified NS teachers if they paid a large sum of money for a private or extra English course. They justified that NS teachers could better help them excel at listening and speaking skills. One highlighted that, *"...if a private course I take is expensive, I'll expect to be taught by a NS teacher because I want to improve my listening and speaking skills"* (Chatroom).

5 Discussion

As the survey data suggested, when judging English language variation, whether implicitly or explicitly, the participants were seemingly vulnerable to relying on stereotypes without considering the sociocultural and sociopolitical ramifications of the global spread of English (Huang, 2009), hence making unwarranted or fallacious assumptions about English language variation. It should be argued that these assumptions have unquestionably become ideological realities, or what Bhatt (2002, p. 75) calls the "regimes of truth" associated with the legitimization of standard language ideology. This ideology not only influenced the participants' evaluations of English language variation, but also their perceptions of English language learning. The study's main findings echo Bhatt's (2002) account of axioms in the fields of TESOL and applied linguistics, namely that "[t]here is a standard language that provides access to knowledge" and "only those few who speak the standard can command linguistic authority over non-standard speakers..." (p. 75). The findings then support a pedagogical proposal emphasizing the need to provide English learners with exposure to global Englishes (Galloway, 2013).

Findings obtained from the global Englishes awareness-raising program revealed the participants' increased tolerance for English language variation, as with previous studies (Galloway, 2013; Rose & Galloway, 2017; Chang, 2014; Sung, 2018; Prabjandee, 2019). In particular, although in the first couple of lessons (Module A), the participants seemed to demonstrate more understanding of the very fact that English must be diverse and that language change is inevitable, their attitudes

toward English language variation appeared to remain firmly attached to the American and British English norms, dismissing other forms of English. The reason for the strong attachment to the mainstream NS norms and disapproval of other forms of English could be related to their entrenched beliefs about English belonging to western NSs and beliefs about English language learning and teaching that defines the notion of linguistic correctness based exclusively on the NS standards. Although the instructional activities in this module were aimed at introducing the participants to different ways in which English can be systematically and meaningfully articulated, including NS and NNS pronunciations and lexico-grammatical innovations, the ones produced by English users outside the mainstream NS group were often branded by the participants as “incorrect”, “inferior” or “broken” language forms. It can be explained that such the narrative of linguistic superiority and inferiority (Jenkins, 2007; Foo & Tan, 2019) has been imposed onto the participants through teaching materials, language testing, classroom instructions and the media, resulting in many of them showing reluctance to accept the legitimacy of NNS varieties and holding the belief that anything that departs from the NS standards is deemed linguistic deficit instead of variation.

As the participants were exposed to more varieties of English and engaged in more critical discussions related to sociolinguistic and sociopolitical concerns surrounding global Englishes (Module B), they began to acknowledge and contest the standard language ideology normalizing people’s reactions to English language variation, became more open-minded about the validity and legitimacy of varieties of English other than American and British English, were more critical of the traditional notion of linguistic ownership being tied to particular NS nations and reportedly noted their own prejudices when judgment of English language variation is concerned. More interestingly, the participants did demonstrate a shift in attitudes toward global Englishes varieties and speakers, as they explicitly reported to have more tolerance for linguistic differences, especially after being engaged in the in-class activities depicting prejudices against people with accent differences. Many reported to feel more empathetic toward speakers who are prejudiced against because of their accents. This suggested that such activities play an influential role in mediating the participants’ evaluations of linguistic differences, as they were able to arouse feelings of injustice in the participants (Finley & Stephen, 2000; Gluszek & Dovidio, 2010). Munro, Derwing and Sato (2006) argue that an awareness-raising task depicting stereotyping of accented speech is useful in helping learners “understand the process through which stereotyped attitudes are instilled and reinforced” (p. 73). In this study, even though the participants did not report having any first-hand experience of linguistic prejudices, they communicated the feeling of sympathy for the victims suffering from linguistic prejudices (e.g. in the cases of Eliza Doolittle and the hateful note left at a Thai restaurant). Prior to these activities, many of the participants may have consciously and unconsciously believed that non-mainstream varieties and speakers deserve low prestige and status to which they have been associated with negative traits and evaluated negatively consequently (as reflected in the findings obtained from the VGT and questionnaire). However, in these activities, seeing that English speakers of non-mainstream groups were treated unjustly may have liberated the participants’ views that it was no longer justifiable holding negative stereotyped attitudes toward particular groups of English speakers (Finley & Stephen, 2000) and to eventually clear some of their prejudices against English speakers of different first language and cultural backgrounds (Ahn, 2015).

The participants’ increased tolerance for English language variation could also be observed through how they perceived English language learning (Module C). Supporting previous research, the participants in this study tended to problematize the notion of good English teachers based on accents and nationalities. This finding suggested that, compared to their overwhelmed preferences for NS teacher in the survey, the participants gained more positive attitudes toward teaching professionals whose mother tongues are not English and were able to think more critically about what makes a good teacher and what successful learning is. This is supported by their self-comparison of their previous and current thoughts on competent English teachers, as they noted that they used to believe that NSs make better English teachers. Apart from being open-minded about NNS teachers, the participants also acknowledged the importance of English classroom featuring different varieties

of English in order to prepare them to become global citizens, although NS varieties were largely preferred as the suitable models for improving listening and speaking skills.

6 Conclusion

This study investigated English learners' attitudes toward English language variation and the impacts of raising their awareness of global Englishes on their attitudes toward English language variation. The findings showed that when the English learners were exposed to global Englishes components through awareness-raising activities, they tended to respond to English language variation more positively, leading to what Ahn (2015) calls "the development of differentiated attitudes rather than rigid stereotypes" ascribed to varieties of English. That is, getting more exposure to global Englishes may be linked to the English learners developing more tolerance for English language variation. With an awareness of global Englishes, the English learners were likely to arrive at a non-NS-centric orientation to English language variation (Ahn, 2015), fostering new understandings of the plurilithic nature of English. In particular, their engagement with discussions on the intricacies of the global spread of English and sociolinguistic and sociopolitical concerns surrounding global Englishes probably provided them with opportunities to evaluate their experiences of learning and using English through the lens that supports linguistic diversity, particularly helping them notice the impracticality of the NS and NNS dichotomy, while shaping their views toward the relevance of linguistic diversity in language learning (Sung, 2018).

This study provided some important implications for incorporating global Englishes components into the classrooms. We believe that language classroom has often been narrowly defined as the learning of prescribed linguistic forms of certain codified standard varieties. This may result in learners forming negative stereotypes about forms of English that deviate from the NS standards and prejudicial reactions against global Englishes speakers. As this study suggested, raising language learners' awareness of global Englishes can be a promising means to mediating their preconceived attitudes toward English language variation and more importantly to improve their tolerance for English language variation. However, while this study suggested that an increased knowledge and awareness of global Englishes can effectively shape how English learners thought about English language variation, questions remain as to how global Englishes perspectives can guide their behavioral responses to language use and learning, an area that needs to be examined in future research.

As also suggested by the findings, when engaging English learners in discussions of various global Englishes concerns, they became more critical when judging English varieties and their speakers. However, this study was limited in not introducing the use of productive communication strategies, especially in NNS-NNS or ELF interactions. This is, perhaps, the reason why some of the participants in this study responded to NNS speaking styles negatively, without taking into account a possibility that a particular NNS may be using, for example, an accommodation strategy to help him/her achieve successful communication (Jenkins, 2007). Therefore, it is warranted for future research to design an intervention to raise English learners' awareness of effective ELF communication strategies and test the potential effectiveness of the treatment.

References

- Ahn, H. (2015). Awareness of and attitudes to Asian Englishes: A study of English teachers in South Korea. *Asian Englishes*, 17(2), 132–151.
- Baker, C. (1992). *Attitudes and language*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Bayyurt, Y., & Sifakis, N. (2017). Foundations of an EIL-aware teacher education. In A. Matsuda (Ed), *Preparing teachers to teaching English as an international language* (pp.3–18). Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
- Bhatt, R.M. (2002). Experts, dialects, and discourse. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 12(1), 74–109.
- Boonsuk, Y., & Ambele, E. A. (2019). Who 'owns English' in our changing world? Exploring the perception of Thai university students in Thailand. *Asian Englishes*, (online version) doi: 10.1080/13488678.2019.1669302.

- Brown, K., & J. Peterson. (1997). Exploring conceptual frameworks: Framing world Englishes paradigm. In L. E. Smith & M. L. Forman (Eds.), *World Englishes 2000* (pp. 32–47). Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.
- Buckingham, L. (2014). Attitudes to English teachers' accents in the Gulf. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 24(1), 50–73.
- Buripakdi, A. (2012). On professional writing: Thai writers' views on their English. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 22(2), 245–264.
- Chang, Y. J. (2014). Learning English today: What can world Englishes teach college students in Taiwan? *English Today*, 30(1), 21–27.
- Crystal, D. (1997). *English as a global language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Denscombe, M. (2003). *The good research guide/or small-scale social research projects* (2nd edn.). Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Dornyei, Z. (2007). *Research methods in applied linguistics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Finlay, K., Stephen, W. (2000). Improving intergroup relations: The effects of empathy on racial attitudes. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 30(8), 1720–1735.
- Foo, A. L., & Tan, Y. (2019). Linguistic insecurity and the linguistic ownership among Singaporean Chinese. *World Englishes*, 38, 606–629.
- Galloway, N. (2013). Global Englishes and English language teaching (ELT) – Bridging the gap between theory and practice in a Japanese context. *System*, 41(3), 786–803.
- Galloway, N., & Rose, H. (2015). *Introducing global Englishes*. London: Routledge.
- Gluszek, A., & Dovidio, J. F. (2010). The way they speak: psychological perspective on the stigma of nonnative accents in communication. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 14(2), 214–37.
- He, D., & Miller, L. (2011). English teacher preference: The case of China's non-English-major students. *World Englishes*, 30(3), 428–443.
- Huang, S. (2009). Global English and EFL learners: Implications for critical pedagogy. *The Journal of ASIA TEFL*, 6(3), 327–350.
- Jenkins, J. (2007). *English as a lingua franca: Attitudes and identity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Jindapitak, N. (2015). English as a lingua franca: Learners' views on pronunciation, *Electronic Journal of Foreign Language Teaching*, 12(2), 260–275.
- Jindapitak, N., Teo, A., & Savski, K. (forthcoming). Bringing global Englishes to ELT classroom: Reflections from English language learners.
- Ke, I., & Cahyani, H. (2014). Learning to become users of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF): How ELF online communication affects Taiwanese learners' beliefs of English. *System*, 46, 28–38.
- Marlina, R. (2018). *Teaching English as an international language: Implementing, reviewing and re-envisioning world Englishes in language education*. Oxon, Abingdon: Routledge.
- Matsuda, A. (2012). *Principles and practices of teaching English as an international language*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
- Matsuda, A. (2017). *Preparing teachers to teaching English as an international language*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
- McKenzie, R. M., & Gilmore, A. (2017). The people who are out of right English: Japanese university students' social evaluations of English language diversity and the internalization of Japanese higher education. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 27(1), 152–175.
- Munro, M. J., Derwing, T. M., & Sato, K. (2006). Salient accents, covert attitudes: Consciousness-raising for pre-service second language teachers. *Prospect*, 21(1), 67–79.
- Pedrazzini, L. (2015). Raising trainee teachers' awareness of language variation through data-based tasks. In P. Vettorel (Ed), *New frontiers in teaching and learning English* (pp.77–101). Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Prabandee, D. (2018). Teacher professional development to implement global Englishes language teaching. *Asian Englishes*. (online version) doi: 10.1080/13488678.2019.1624931.
- Rose, H., & Galloway, N. (2017). Debating standard language ideology in the classroom: Using the 'Speak Good English Movement' to raise awareness of global Englishes. *RELC Journal*, (online version) doi: 10.1177/0033688216684281
- Saldana, J. (2009). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. Los Angeles, CA: SAGE.
- Sung, C. C. M. (2018). Out-of-class communication and awareness of English as a lingua franca. *ELT Journal*, 72(1), 15–25.
- Svalberg, A. M. L. (2007). Language awareness and language learning. *Language Teaching*, 40(4), 287–308.
- Widdowson, H. G. (1994). The ownership of English. *TESOL Quarterly*, 28(2), 337–389.
-

