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## Foreword

Welcome to the June 2018 issue of the Journal of English as an International Language!

This issue signposts a continuity/ continuum of conceptualizations, intellectual exercises and affinitive applications that are consistent with EILJ's declared mission of promoting locally appropriate, culturally sensitive and socially attuned pedagogies and practices in EIL. The voice and agency of our contributing authors assume particular immediacy and primacy in this issue in that it is commensurate with EILJ's attempts to democratize and dehegemonize the use of English across the cultures of Asia and farther afield in the world.

Khoi Ngoc Mai's paper, "Characteristics of non-native English-speaking teachers' English development: Voice from Vietnam", responds to a practical situation in Vietnam as most teachers of English were unable to achieve the B2 standard of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. The paper presents findings that are in keeping with the voice and agency of the teachers, which has not received the attention it deserves in their English proficiency development. Given that it has been viewed via a depersonalised bureaucratic narrative, the author believes that although such an approach can ensure administrative efficiency it fails to account for the lived-through experiences of the teachers in their attempts to develop their English language proficiency. Pointing out the four emergent themes from the data analysis: the spontaneity of teachers' learning, three motivational factors driving English proficiency development, the dominance of traditional over internet-mediated learning activities and the popularity of individual rather than collaborative learning activities, the paper situates teachers' development in a model that underscores the need to listen to teachers' voice so as to understand their development of proficiency in the English language before long-term and meaningful support programs can be formulated and implemented. In light of this, the author feels that the English teachers in Vietnam deserve to function in more favourable and supportive work environments instead of being trapped in work situations, where they are seen as unquestioning/compliant recipients of extractive government policies and practices. Only then the Vietnamese government can understand better as to what constitutes their teachers' English proficiency development and its underlying characteristics. Without this knowledge it will be humanly impossible for the Vietnamese government to formulate an appropriate working plan to

support teachers' practical needs and their English language proficiency development.

Beril Arik and Engin Tarik's (one of our Editors) paper: "English-medium instruction in Turkish higher education: The current state of English in psychology departments" focuses on the use of English in psychology departments across Turkish universities given that psychology is one of the academic domains, where English functions as the dominant global language. Utilizing data drawn from official reports and 287 psychology students who evaluated the use of English in their program via a questionnaire, the authors have been able to ascertain that in spite of English being the medium of instruction accounting for 40% of all undergraduate instruction and degrees in psychology awarded by Turkish universities, their measures of students' proficiency varied. While the students felt that their comprehension levels increased during their program of study, it would be beneficial to use supporting materials in Turkish concurrently with those materials designed in English for their core courses. Further to this, they felt that the lectures could also be delivered in Turkish. In light of this, the authors argue for the need to factor in a diverse range of teaching learning experiences, which can offer us a more in-depth and nuanced understanding of English as an international language, and help us learn not only from the trials and tribulations of research but also from the trials and successes of dedicated students, language professionals, administrators, and policy makers. While earlier research has repeatedly stressed that the spread of English as an international language is neither linear nor equal in different countries, domains, or disciplines, this study by providing supporting evidence for that underscores the relevance of using a translingual approach to the teaching of core disciplinary courses through English medium.

Charlotte Fofo Lomotey's paper, "Fluidity and variation in lexical stress placement in Ghanaian English Discourse: A case for systematicity in communication in world Englishes", investigates the issue of lexical stress placement by speakers of Ghanaian English. Having analyzed data consisting of 13 hours of English conversations by 200 Ghanaian university students both auditorily and acoustically, the author argues that Ghanaians show fluidity and variation in their lexical stress placement, which is similar to the Englishes used in the Englishes of outer and expanding circles. Although there are ways in which Ghanaian speakers of English differ from inner circle speakers of English in the way they mark lexical stress, this does not in any way undermine the intelligibility of their speech. While research on intelligibility in English has usually been done with native speakers of

English being the judges and arbiters of non-native English speakers' speech, the author argues that in EIL or ELF, all users have equal stake and responsibility in making sure that they sound intelligible. In light of this, the speaker, whether native or non-native, should not bear full responsibility for making sure that his/her words are clear as the listener also needs to listen well because intelligibility is a two-way street. This well nuanced argument by the author is particularly valuable to EILJ given its declared thrust on dehegemonization of and democratization of English to promote the prevalence of a heterogeneous global English speech community. It is important then for listeners to rely on many cues and the context of interaction in order to comprehend the speech of the speaker. While English speakers from different countries and different continents may sound similar as well as different from one another, it is important for listeners, irrespective of the circle of English they belong to, to come to terms with the systematic stress patterning of their speakers so as to achieve intelligibility and comprehensibility in their use of world Englishes (WE).

Hang Thi Nhu Mai's paper, "Teaching English as an International Language: Variables Affecting Vietnamese EFL Lecturers' Beliefs" presents an array of issues and insights synonymous with the factors that influence the changes of teachers' beliefs in EIL. A close-ended questionnaire distributed to 57 Vietnamese lecturers is the mainstay of the study and the stimuli for the scheme of argumentation used by the author accrues from it. Based on the findings of the study, the author asserts that teachers' international learning experience and exposure have significant influence on their EIL teaching perspectives, while their teaching experience, qualifications, and gender have no significant impact. In light of this, the author further argues that teachers exposed to intercultural environments are ideally placed/positioned as well as equipped to foster and augment those set of attitudes and beliefs that assume primacy and immediacy in their adaptation of EIL pedagogies and practices in their respective teaching learning spheres. Given the centrality of cultural diversity and intercultural competence in EIL pedagogies, the author makes a strong case for significant immersion experiences in multicultures, which will be very different for the teachers' own culture. In keeping with this position, the author recommends that policy makers and employers in Vietnam should support and facilitate teachers' participation in international events or exchange programs initiated by international institutions. Directing critical attention to the dominance of the native-speaker model in Vietnamese ELT classrooms where the cultures of English-speaking

countries are introduced and emphasized more than learners' own cultures and other cultures, the author signposts Vietnam's zero receptivity/sensitivity to World Englishes such as Indian English, Singlish or Manglish. Such a prevalence, the author notes, can help explain as to why many English users in Vietnam are facing problems using the language with non-native-English speakers in daily communications. Citing a number of studies done by Vietnamese teachers of EIL, the author calls for an informed understanding of the factors causing changes in teachers' beliefs and the variables affecting teachers' beliefs to develop and sustain locally appropriate, culturally sensitive and socially attuned EIL teaching implementation in the Vietnamese higher education classrooms.

Chiharu Tsurutani's paper entitled: "Tone of voice or what was said? The impression non-native speakers of English make on Australian English native listeners", investigates the relative and consequential impact of verbal expression and tone of voice when native speakers of English use them as a basis to form an impression of non-native speech. Four expressions of inquiry uttered in two tones by non-native speakers were analyzed and judged by native listeners using an ordinal Probit model. Plain expressions obtained lower scores than polite expressions in both tones, prompting the belief that appropriate expression is more important than tone of voice. This is to suggest that listeners form their impression of a speaker based on the content of their utterance and its inherent predictability. However, the paper notes that non-native speech is not always commensurate with this norm, and an expression that is unusual and unexpected for the native speaker-interlocutor can obstruct smooth communication. Consequently, much to the discomfiture of native speakers, such a situation could prompt them to comment on the non-native speech as unfriendly in its tone of voice. Needless to say that non-native learners would not intentionally use an arrogant tone of voice, their lack of pragmatic knowledge could sometimes result in their use of an inappropriate expression (as observed in the selection of inquiry expressions in the Japanese travel guide). This, as the author contends is often the case, where beginners rely heavily on a textbook or a guidebook for their choice of expression to use. In light of this, the author urges instructors to illustrate both the appropriacy and inappropriacy of text book expressions for social settings/purposes in spite of their grammatical correctness and simplicity. Further to this, the author urges native listeners to be more accommodating and considerate of the difficulty that non-native speakers experience/face, while non-native speakers must pay more attention to the appropriateness of their expression. Such a realization will scale up manifold the quality of multicultural communication and

the pragmatic knowledge underlying it in the ever-increasing multicultural settings that we need to negotiate for a better understanding of our role in engendering a just and fair world.

Jerry Smith's paper entitled: "The World Englishes and Cross-Cultural Communication", provides an interesting closure to this issue given its tone and tenor. Picking up on the premise that cross-cultural communication can be problematic due to the differences between World Englishes (WE), especially its grammar, the paper speaks to the differences in grammar between the two Englishes: Filipino English (FE) and Standard American English (SAE) that have the potential to create miscommunication. The paper takes a close look at the differences between the grammars of the two English varieties that include article use, collocations, pluralization of mass nouns, question formation, and verb tense. In light of this, the author persuades his readership to come to terms with the perceived inconsistencies between the varieties of WE, which can lead to miscommunication or serious misunderstandings in cross-cultural settings that have become increasingly unavoidable in our everyday use of the English language. Raising a host of rhetorical questions underlying his principal theoretical stance, the author entreats his readership to critically examine the question: Does the phenomenon of World Englishes in cross-cultural settings actually promote enhanced communication between cultures or do these varieties of English engender confusion? Further to this, the author makes a candid admission that his view and position on EIL might run counter to EILJ's beliefs and values, which are diametrically opposed to being "politically correct" in the use of English. Yet, he contends that if we use English as a tool of choice for communication, it should then help us devise methods and means to avoid miscommunication in cross-cultural settings. Right at the end the author hastens to state that his paper is neither meant to privilege one English over another nor justify a search for "perfect English". While the author is open to accepting any informed falsification of his assumptions, he believes that his paper can help raise awareness of "a potentially foreseeable concern".

In closing, I wish to applaud the epistemic resolve and resilience of the contributing authors in this issue. They have showcased their alternate discourses of current reckoning in EIL in order to make sense of their world and their self. They have thus made bold border crossings to signpost the translatability of their issues and insights in the practices of EIL. Such endeavours are central to EILJ's declared mission of creating "a heterogeneous global English speech community, with a heterogeneous English and different modes of competence"

(Canagarajah, 2006, p. 211). Given this, I am certain that the issues and insights discussed in this issue would serve as a lamp to all of us, without which we will all be stranded in a “methodological wasteland of EIL”. Read on!

**Dr. Sivakumar Sivasubramaniam**

**Chief Editor**

# **Characteristics of non-native English-speaking teachers’ English development: Voice from Vietnam**

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## **Abstract**

This research was conducted in Vietnam, responding to a practical situation as most teachers of English failed to attain the B2 standard of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. It presents findings regarding the characteristics of these teachers’ process of English proficiency development. From the analysis, four themes emerged: the spontaneity of teachers’ learning, three motivational factors driving English proficiency development, the dominance of traditional over internet-mediated learning activities and the popularity of individual rather than collaborative learning activities. The paper conceptualizes teachers’ development in a model with four continua which can cater for the differences between individual teachers and also allow shifts on these axes as the English proficiency development activities and motivations change over time. The paper ends by emphasizing the need to listen to teachers’ voice to understand their English development before long-term and meaningful support programs can be drafted.

**Keywords:** teacher language proficiency, professional development, non-native teachers, teacher education, Vietnam

## **Introduction**

In Vietnamese, the verb “to teach” is “*dạy học*” which comprises of two verbs “*dạy*” and “*học*,” “to teach” and “to learn” respectively. In this sense, these two processes are inseparable. In the implementation of the current educational reform in Vietnam, studies regarding teachers’ English development as life-long learners are still scarce. This study argues that it is crucial for non-native English speaking (NNES) teacher trainers and policy makers to recognize that teachers are also continuous learners and due attention needs to be paid to understand and support their life-long English development.

As acknowledged by the Deputy Minister of Education Nguyen Vinh Hien, the biggest problem in English language teaching (ELT) in Vietnam is the lack of teachers who are proficient in English (Vietnamnews, 2012). The result of a nationwide survey of primary and secondary school English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers’ English proficiency indicates that approximately 80,000 EFL teachers need further English training because 97, 93, and 98 per cent of in-service EFL teachers at primary, lower secondary,

and upper secondary schools respectively are not fluent enough in English to function effectively as teachers (Nguyen & Dudzik, 2013). One goal of the National Foreign Language Project 2020 (hereafter Project 2020) which was set up in 2008 with a budget of around 9.5 trillion VND (approximately 4.5 billion USD) is to promote and improve ELT by providing training to help teachers attain the appropriate level of English proficiency specified by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). The appropriate levels are: C1 for upper secondary teachers and B2 for lower secondary teachers and primary teachers (MOET et al., 2012).

This study responds to the practical situation in Vietnam as thousands of EFL teachers are struggling to reach the B2 standard. It fills a gap in the literature by investigating teachers' perception of their English abilities, responses to the English proficiency standards imposed by the Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training (hereafter MOET), and descriptions of their English proficiency development. Data were collected by conducting semi-structured interviews to answer the following research questions: (1) How do the participants describe their English proficiency development? and (2) What are the characteristics of their English development? It is found that the majority of teachers are working in difficult, under-resourced circumstances with inadequate payment and limited support. Therefore, much still has to rely on individual teachers' initiatives, determination and self-efforts to pursue professional development, including improving their English proficiency.

### **NNES teacher language proficiency**

Teacher professional competence (TPC) is a multifaceted construct that has been defined in various ways (e.g., Nicholas, 1993; Pasternak & Bailey, 2004). In all definitions of TPC, there is one common component: teacher language proficiency which refers to the proficiency in using the target language. There is a consensus in the literature regarding the importance of teacher language proficiency as an important component of TPC (e.g., Berry, 1990; Briguglio & Kirkpatrick, 1996; Lavender, 2002). For the NNES teachers, this component is critical due to its influence on teachers' confidence and teaching practice. Evidence supporting this can be found in the early literature concerning the dichotomy between native and NNES teachers and the studies concerning teachers' confidence (e.g., Murdoch, 1994; Reves & Medgyes, 1994; Tang, 1997). In short, it is generally agreed that NNES teachers' proficiency may influence their teaching practice including the choice and use of teaching methods as well as the quality of input teachers provide for their students (Farrell & Richards, 2007). Since rich input is fundamental to language development, and since teachers' language output might be the only input available for students in EFL contexts, the NNES teachers need to attain a high level of language proficiency. It has been even stated that NNES teachers' most important professional responsibility is to

make improvements in their English proficiency (Medgyes, 2001). While native-like pronunciation or intonation might not be necessary, these teachers need a sufficient mastery of English to be effective, self-confident, and satisfied professionals (Davies, 1991).

One important question is what level of language proficiency NNES teachers should have. Many countries have established standards suitable to their own contexts of English teaching and learning. Yet, due to limited research on the language proficiency for the specific purpose of teaching, it is often the case that global language proficiency tests are used to measure teacher language proficiency. The levels required for pre- and in-service teachers to attain are also regularly set according to such global scales. In Vietnam, the English teacher competency framework created by MOET as part of the NFL Project 2020 prescribes that:

Teachers demonstrate proficiency in the target language at an appropriate level on the Common European Framework of Reference—Upper secondary teachers, C1; Lower Secondary teachers, B2; Primary teachers, B2 (MOET et al., 2012, p. 23).

Although administrators in many contexts propose specific standards of language proficiency, the literature indicates that NNES teachers very often fail to meet such requirements. Research conducted in many EFL contexts including mainland China, Japan, Korea, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Taiwan, Thailand, and Japan all provide evidence concerning NNES teachers' lack of proficiency (e.g., Bryson, 2004; Butler, 2004; Coniam & Falvey, 2013; Nunan, 2003; Tang, 2007; Wall, 2008). Therefore, as the lack of qualified EFL teachers is not unique to the Vietnamese context, educators and policy makers in other countries facing the same challenge to the improvement of EFL teachers' English proficiency can benefit from this exploratory study concerning the nature of teachers' English development.

### **Problems with NNES teachers' professional development**

It is agreed that language teachers should continue to pursue professional development throughout their lives. Peyton (1997) argues that foreign language teachers should maintain proficiency in the target language and consider such maintenance an on-going process regardless of their current skills and knowledge. It is also agreed that both pre- and in- service teacher education programs should help teachers improve their English proficiency as well as their professionalism (e.g., Barnes, 2002; Berry, 1990; Chacón, 2005; Kamhi-Stein, 1999; Lavender, 2002; Liu, 1999; Murdoch, 1994; Pasternak & Bailey, 2004). Despite this consensus, the literature suggests that in-service EFL education programs do not offer many opportunities for language teachers to improve their language skills but instead focus on pedagogical knowledge. The language proficiency development of these teachers is often

taken for granted. Indeed, TESOL programs often do not formally teach speaking and listening since they tend to assume that the teachers already have a high proficiency level (Pasternak & Bailey, 2004, p. 166).

Medgyes (1999) comments that language training is ignored in many TESOL programs; consequently, their pre-service teachers do not attempt to make linguistic improvement. He argues that in order to prepare NNES teachers to be “effective, self-confident, and satisfied professionals,” pre-service education needed to include language training program (Medgyes, 1999, p. 179). Similarly, Liu (1999) and Shin (2008) both argued that many TESOL programs overlooked NNES pre-service teachers’ need to have the English proficiency required for success in their future teaching as most programs focused on enhancing students’ explicit knowledge of how the language operates rather than their ability to use the language. They called for training programs to incorporate a language improvement component and support teachers to develop their English both during the training courses and outside the classroom.

Fraga-Canadas (2010) surveyed non-native teachers’ language use outside and inside the school setting and found that most teachers experienced difficulties maintaining their language proficiency once they were in the profession, especially when confined to teaching lower-level classes for a long period of time. They also believed that their university language coursework had failed to provide them either with an adequate proficiency level or meaningful professional development.

In summary, the literature shows that despite the acknowledged importance of language proficiency development for NNES teachers, most teacher training and development programs have not yet given due attention and efforts to help teachers maintain or improve their language skills. In Vietnam, plans are being carried out as part of the NFL Project 2020 to “standardize” those teachers’ English proficiency. However, there is limited research investigating the actual English development process of these teachers while they should be considered lifelong learners with all the difficulties, anxiety and needs typical of language learners. It is therefore crucial to understand the characteristics of their English development before meaningful and effective support programs can be drafted.

## **Methodology**

To answer the research questions (How do the participants describe their English proficiency development? and what are the characteristics of their English development?), this paper reports the findings from semi-structured interviews conducted with 42 in-service EFL teachers. These teachers were recruited for the interviews while they were attending MOET’s compulsory professional development courses to improve English proficiency and teaching methodology. They were chosen on a voluntary basis from a pool of 298 participants who previously completed a self-assessed English proficiency

survey which was published in 2014 (Mai, 2014). The large number of participants allows the voices of various teachers who are working at both primary and secondary levels in four Northern provinces of the countries to be heard. In addition, the chosen teachers also have different lengths of teaching experience ranging from two to more than twenty years.

Table 1.

*Interview participants*

Location	Level of teaching		Teaching experience			Total
	Primary	Secondary	≤5 years	5-10 years	> 10 years	
Hanoi	4	4	2	2	4	8
Nam Dinh	7	5	2	3	7	12
Thanh Hoa	5	5	3	4	3	10
Hai Phong	6	6	4	3	5	12
Total	22	20	11	12	19	42

The interviews were conducted during the lunch break or after the daily training was concluded. See Appendix 1 for questions. All the interviews were conducted in Vietnamese so that misunderstandings were minimized and the participants did not worry about their English proficiency being assessed. Each interview was between 30 and 45 minutes duration and was audio-recorded with the participants' permission. The interviews were transcribed and translated from Vietnamese to English by the researcher and then checked by the interviewees for accuracy or for any further clarification.

The data analysis embraces three characteristics of qualitative analysis discussed by Dörnyei (2007) as a broad framework: being iterative, emergent and interpretive. The interview data analysis moved back and forth without a clear separation between data collection and analysis, allowing data analysis to be emergent. After each interview was conducted, I immediately transcribed and conducted preliminary analysis, especially before moving to another data collection site. The interview questions therefore were repeatedly refined. The list of the final interview questions is attached with this paper. The analysis was interpretive as the outcome was the product of my own informed interpretation of the data. Meanwhile, in order to limit these and guarantee that the findings and interpretations are trustworthy, I have taken due care to argue critically and support the interpretations with facts and relevant evidence.

## Results

Participants started by introducing themselves and their working context. Next, they were asked to describe their current plan and purposes for English development, the time they allocated weekly to English practice, their favourite and frequently used learning activities, personal and professional difficulties that hindered English development. From the analysis, four themes emerged as the dominant characteristics of the participants' English proficiency practice.

### *Teachers' spontaneous language learning*

The most significant feature is the spontaneous nature of the participants' English development. Participants seem to lack specific and either short- or long- term plans to continuously hone their English skills. Despite the well-articulated awareness of the importance of lifelong learning, they were quite hesitant to discuss their actual plans for English improvement. Most participants agreed that passing the B2 standard test was their current and important short-term plan while claiming a vague goal of having "better English proficiency" as their long-term plan. Yet, when probed with questions regarding how that goal would be realized, almost all the participants admitted that they did not have specific objectives for English improvement apart from participating in the compulsory teacher development courses or pursuing postgraduate programs. Participants often attributed this lack of plan to the time-consuming tasks and responsibilities related to teaching and other commitments. To illustrate this, one newly graduated teacher shared some thoughts about her lack of clear plans to spend time purposefully on her English.

I am kind of lazy [giggle] so ... No, I don't have a plan or weekly schedule. As a newly employed teacher, I have many responsibilities to fulfil, many tasks to do during working hours. It is quite demanding. Then I have to tutor at home for some extra income. If I have some free time by the end of the week, I would rather spend it with my boyfriend.

Other participants, while not directly stating that they had no specific plan, evaded the matter and supplied vague and formulaic phrases about the importance of having detailed schedules for language improvement. Most participants (39/42) however explained that while they did not spend time purposefully and solely on developing English proficiency, their learning often happened by chance as narrated in the following excerpt.

I don't have a specific plan, but I know I need to improve. It is not because of the B2 standard test a few months ago. I always know that I need to keep improving. It is for my students, my colleagues, my school,

and me. Yet I really don't have a plan. I did try to make schedules for language learning, but as a teacher, a wife, and a mother, there are so many things, little unnamed but very time-consuming tasks, to do. I just can't keep up with the deadlines. What's the point of making plans only to abandon them? So now I don't rely on plans anymore. If I have free time, I will sit down and learn some new words, read an article, or do some exercises.

This spontaneous nature of teacher learning is further highlighted by the teachers' responses regarding the weekly average time devoted to English proficiency practice. Many participants refused to quote an approximate amount, explaining that it varied greatly from one week to another. A typical answer was that it depended on their teaching schedule and available time. Others explained that learning was a natural process as a part of their teaching profession. They believed that their English practice was entailed in their everyday life rather than a separate activity. As English learning could happen during various activities including teaching, it would be impossible and inaccurate to quote an average amount spent on it.

It is rather spontaneous and, I guess, natural as well. I pick up new things here and there all the time without having to sit down and consciously working to improve my English. Just yesterday, I was watching a movie with my family and acquired a lovely word "serendipity". It is the name of the movie and means a nice thing that happens only by chance. I often learn new words that way.

The participants who disclosed their amount of time spent on English development provided different numbers, ranging from half an hour up to eight hours a week. Even for these participants, there were also no particular plans or regular routine language learning activities. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that the participants' English development is characterized by irregularity and extemporaneousness driven by personal and sudden interest as expressed in the following quotation:

I don't have any particular plan. If there is an interesting broadcast, I will watch it. If I happen to have a magazine or a new novel written in English, I might read it. Uhm, I do not make plans for language learning. It is sort of improvisation on the situation.

### ***Motivational factors driving teachers' English proficiency development***

The second characteristic pertains to three main motivational purposes behind teachers' efforts to improve. These three goals are to satisfy their personal interests, to meet MOET's requirements and maintain face, and to improve their teaching.

Firstly, the participants' language learning is prompted by their personal interest and self-improvement needs. One teacher explained that she learned many words related to astrology because this is her favourite topic to read. Similarly, another teacher explained how her hobby, embroidery, contributed to expanding her English vocabulary as she regularly surfed the Internet to teach herself new embroidery skills. Other teachers explained how their daily life shaped their learning as in the following excerpts.

My husband often asks me to help him with all sorts of paperwork. He is an engineer, and is not very good at English. As I help him with his documents, I become familiar with the terminology.

The second reason motivating participants' English development is that of passing the requirements specified by MOET and thereby maintaining face. They needed to study in order to pass the B2 standard tests, score higher on proficiency tests such as TOEIC, IELTS, TOEFL, or postgraduate program entrance examinations.

If I fail to achieve B2, I may face dismissal. MOET said that no teacher would be dismissed, but who knows. Their policies keep changing every year. I have been teaching English for thirteen years. If that worst-case scenario happens, I will feel very ashamed. I have to study hard.

The third and also the most frequently mentioned reason driving teachers' English development is that of improving themselves in order to better help their students to learn English. All participants agreed that as their English improved, their students would be the ones to benefit the most. One participant succinctly expressed this popular belief as follows:

If I am a better English user, there is no doubt that my students' English will improve as well. I am the living model of the language in the class. Not all students are lucky enough to have frequent access to the Internet or cable television. So they learn from me. If I am getting better, they will learn more. It is just that simple.

Participants strongly believed that having a higher proficiency level would enable them to improve their teaching, make it more interesting and fruitful by employing various teaching methods, techniques and more diverse support materials. The following excerpts present some typical voices.

I know when my students feel bored, and they also know when I feel tired, bored or angry. There is no way to hide it. Students secretly, sometimes even openly, judge and compare one teacher with another. If you are not as good as the teachers who are teaching in other classes, students will feel unmotivated to learn. If you are better, they will

respect you, and more willing to pay attention.

If you are confident to use English frequently in class, students will be motivated to learn. You can be more flexible, and don't have to rely too much on the lesson plan or the textbook.

When asked to clarify what they meant by "getting better," participants mostly referred to both their and their students' performances in different tests and exams as a standard. In other words, success is interpreted as passing tests with higher results.

My students will score higher on the final exams at the end of the year. Some might get through the district or even provincial round of student English competition. The class ranking will be higher. These are successes. There is nothing more tangible and practical than that.

Indeed, the various exams and tests in Vietnam not only target the students but also are used to assess teachers. The participants struggled to improve English proficiency not just to develop communicative competence, but rather more importantly to score higher in MOET standard tests and to help their students perform better in similar examination. It is, therefore, reasonable to conclude that teachers' English development is mainly exam-driven in addition to the participants' personal interest in the language.

### ***The dominance of traditional over internet-mediated learning activities***

The learning activities participants employed to practise English were broadly categorized into two types, namely traditional and internet-mediated activities.

Table 2 shows an overwhelming dominance of traditional activities over internet-mediated activities (The numbers in brackets indicate the number of participants who mentioned each activity during the interviews). One explanation for this preference is the participants' lack of access to the Internet, which is directly related to both economic and administrative reasons. Vietnam is a less developed country, and most rural teachers, especially those located in economically disadvantaged areas, have difficulties in accessing online resources and support.

Of the traditional language learning activities, the most popular are the study of grammatical and phonetic materials. Forty participants stated that their main learning activity was to study these materials to prepare for their teaching, various exams and language tests. English education is mainly driven by test wash-back as its ultimate aim seems not to improve students' communicative competencies but to help them score higher in achievement and proficiency tests. This purpose makes the teachers' English development also exam-driven rather than communicative.

Table 2.

*Teachers' language learning activities*

<b>Traditional learning activities</b>	
Study English textbooks (Grammar textbook and EFL learners' resources)	40
Watch analog or cable television broadcast in English	40
Listen to radio programs broadcast in English	38
Read written materials in English including newspapers, magazines, and novels	31
Do practice sample tests	31
Converse in English with colleagues, students, friends, and family members	24
Pursue further education in English	14
Organize a study group to prepare for particular tests (IELTS/ TOEFL/ B2 Standard tests)	5
<b>Internet-mediated learning activities</b>	
Watch online news, movies, or other video materials in English	27
Read online English written materials (electronic versions of newspapers, novels, etc.)	20
Listen to online podcasts in English	7
Participate in online language learning courses	3
Exchanging emails in English with friends or colleagues	2

The second most popular learning activities are reading traditional paper-based English –written materials, and watching/listening to programs broadcast in English on television or radio. However, when asked to clarify these traditional and old-fashioned ways of learning English (e.g., regarding the frequency of listening to or watching news programs), participants provided very vague answers, such as the following quote.

It depends if I have free time or in the mood to do so. Some weeks I watch the news almost every night. Some weeks I hardly watch television.

When asked to name some of their favourite television programs, radio channels, or asked to specify the English language newspapers to which they were currently subscribed to or the novels they were reading, nearly all participants hesitated and appeared uncomfortable. The most frequently listed radio programs are those of the BBC and VOA channels. The most popular websites for reading and watching news are [www.cnn.com](http://www.cnn.com) and [www.bbc.com.uk](http://www.bbc.com.uk). However, given their current A2 or B1 level of English proficiency (as revealed in the results of the national survey), one would question how they could comprehend these materials which seem to require a proficiency level of English significantly higher than theirs.

Regarding speaking skills, 24 participants reported that they sometimes conversed in English with colleagues, friends, and more often with their children and students. Following is a typical voice acknowledging the benefits of using English in class as a way of practicing listening and speaking skills.

Last semester I changed the 15' written test into a 5' speaking test. Every week I tested three to four students. I gave them a list of topics at the beginning of the semester so they had time to prepare for it. It involved much more work and responsibility, but the students had an opportunity to use the language and I could practise mine.

Interestingly, no participant explicitly mentioned any language learning activities related to writing skills. One teacher shared that:

I can't remember the last time I sat down and practised my writing. After graduation [from pre-service training], I just don't do it anymore. Now, in this course, I have to re-learn to do it properly, in an academic way. I haven't practised writing for a long time

Perhaps participants neglected writing practice because they did not feel the need to do it. The following participant explained that all the school reports were written in Vietnamese because the headmaster and most school officials were often not fluent in English.

We hardly write anything in English. We, English teachers, are the minority in this school. The headmaster doesn't speak English. Of all the reports and records we have to prepare, only the lesson plans should be written in English. This is because the officials from DOET [Department of Education and Training] might examine our lesson plans. Yet, some of us only prepare these [English written lesson plan] a few days before the officials' visit.

The unavailability of access to the Internet and the lack of need to use English result in the dominance of traditional learning activities, which in turn might affect the way participants teach English. Most participants, especially those working in rural areas, explained that they were the main source of the target language beside the textbooks. They reported that old technology such as cassette players, despite being obsolete in more developed countries, still prevailed over CD-players and computers in their schools. One teacher who was working in a mountainous school complained that even electricity was a rare commodity there.

Fourteen years into the twenty-first century, we are teaching English, a language of development and a key to modern and successful life, but some of us still have not touched a computer keyboard. Some even don't

know how to turn on and off a CD player. These are the luxuries we don't have.

The participants who were fortunate enough to have access to some multimedia facilities criticized the fact that the administration and management of these technologies left much to be desired. The following teacher shared her discontent regarding how the school's controversial policy discouraged her from using the internet-connected computers.

My school has Internet connected computers. If we [teachers] want to get online, we have to ask for permission from the school management board. Every time we use the Internet, we have to write in the record notebook our name, the date, duration, and our purpose for using the Internet. We decided not to use the Internet to avoid all these hassles. Who knows? It might bring us trouble.

Although most participants did not report such authoritarian policies being imposed in their schools, they acknowledged that there were rules and restrictions. It is unsurprising to learn that language learning facilities and other multimedia resources are used in many schools mainly for ornamental purposes.

### ***The popularity of individual over collaborative learning activities***

Another theme that emerged from the analysis is the strong dominance of individual over collaborative learning activities or activities that involve using English with other people.

As previously presented, the most popular learning activities are traditional learning activities which are all self-focused and conducted individually. In the following excerpt, two participants described their highly individual methods of practising speaking.

Every day while commuting to work, I talk to myself quietly. I always wear a hygiene mask while riding my motorbike, so no one knows what I am doing. The topic is based on the current news or whatever I am interested in that day. I think it is a good habit and a good learning technique. I often recite some monologues or read a piece of news while standing in front of a big mirror. This way I can see my mouth and also monitor my gestures for better performance. Sometimes I hold a piece of paper in front of my mouth to watch and control my breath.

Collaborative learning activities comprise practicing English with students in class, or with colleagues, and pursuing further education related to language teaching. While MOET officially requires schools to organize

professional development activities such as teaching competitions, classroom observations and teacher-group discussions, most participants pointed out that these activities were time-consuming and not tailored to develop their English proficiency.

This final characteristic is the most significant feature connecting all the other previously presented characteristics. Firstly, this preference for individual learning activities is intertwined with the participants' spontaneous language learning. Perhaps due to such an unplanned nature, an individual learning strategy is more practical. Secondly, the dominance of individual learning activities suggests that despite the stated communicative purpose of language learning, English is still taught and learnt as a content subject. The participants seem to equate practice with increasing their familiarity with the language system and sharpening their test-taking skills. They perhaps did not practise to use the language communicatively, but rather to improve their knowledge about the language. Thirdly, the preference for undertaking individual language learning also results in the prevalent choice of traditional learning activities over internet-mediated learning activities as evidenced in the way participants used the Internet. Rather than using the Internet to access on-line English-using environments, they simply regarded these as tools to enter a virtual library, a source of English-language texts on multimedia.

## Discussion

This paper reports four characteristics of participants' English development: the spontaneity of teachers' learning; three motivational factors driving English development; the dominance of traditional over internet-mediated learning activities; and the popularity of individual rather than collaborative learning activities. This finding deserves further investigation. Meanwhile, it is essential that MOET, teacher training institutions, and individual schools work together to promote cooperative learning strategies and establish language learning communities both online and off-line which are friendlier and more available to more teachers.

The paper proposes that NNES teachers' English development can be conceptualized as a model with four continua. These continua can cater for the differences between participants and also allow shifting movements on these axes as participants' English development activities and motivations change over time.

Spontaneous -----	Well-planned
Self-initiated -----	Externally-imposed
Traditional -----	Internet-mediated
Individual -----	Collaborative

Figure 1. *Characteristics of teachers' English development*

The first continuum describes two types of English development,

namely spontaneous and well-planned English development. As discussed previously, most participants did not have specific plans to continuously improve their English proficiency, and very few devoted a fixed amount of time in their weekly schedule for language development. This spontaneous nature of English development is due to participants' lack of self-study skills, heavy workload, and perceptions of English learning as a natural process as part of everyday life activities including teaching. The nature of participants' English development shifts along this continuum according to the different stages in their English learning history (e.g., before and after their pre-service training). The second continuum describes participants' motivations for learning. As motivation is complicated and changeable, this shift happens very frequently and it is hard to pinpoint it in a model. English development is self-initiated when participants' English learning is driven by their intrinsic motivations such as personal interests and the need to improve teaching. Participants' English development can also be imposed by external forces including MOET's English proficiency requirements and professional development programs. Throughout a teacher's English learning history and professional career, his/her English development can shift between two ends of the continuum while different motivations may move in the same or different directions. The third and fourth continua refer to participants' learning activities.

By listening to EFL teachers' description of their English proficiency development, the study found that for the majority of participants, the lack of resources, environments for English use, and language learning communities results in the dominance of traditional and individual learning activities over online and collaborative ones. Their English learning is characterized as spontaneous with traditional and individual language learning activities. It is located on the left end of each continuum in Figure 1. Their motivations for English development, however, take the middle position and shift along the second continuum as they learn English to satisfy personal interests, improve teaching, and meet MOET's requirements.

It is vital to establish and promote language learning communities which provide environments for language use since English as a foreign language is not widely used in Vietnam, especially in the rural provinces. MOET, teacher training institutions, and individual schools can collaborate to encourage and further facilitate teachers' language development. They should not solely rely on standardized assessments and short-lived intensive training programs. Instead, it is more beneficial to aim for creating a learning culture in which teachers can freely learn from each other, reflect on their own practice to improve their proficiency and their teaching without risks of being assessed or shamed. Although the results of this study show teachers' preference for independent professional learning rather than professional development activities that involves engaging with other teachers, many teachers probably will seek out a balance between the two once a "no shame" and "no blame" learning environment has been created and promoted.

Still, teachers' initiatives play a crucial role because if they themselves do not think that they need a better English proficiency, no policy can persuade them to improve. Language development does not happen in isolation or without social interaction; therefore, joining a language learning community can both provide motivations for learning and environment for language use. There are numerous language societies founded by universities, colleges, private language institutes, non-governmental organizations, foreign volunteers, and individuals throughout the countries. They provide an environment for learners to use English, but often operate on a small scale in different local areas, for example in university campuses, with no communication and collaboration among societies. However, these language societies mainly aim at attracting the general learners but not specifically cater to the EFL in-service teachers' needs to improve English proficiency and share teaching knowledge and practices. While it is hoped that an official forum just for the language teachers perhaps in each district or province will be established in the near future, it is beneficial for teachers to actively look for or even start their own language learning communities.

Countless number of online blogs, podcasts, and forums are free and invaluable resources for English practice. In addition, blogging can be used both as a way of maintaining target language proficiency and to develop reflective teaching. For teachers to acquire the required language competency and technical skills to blog and maintain on-going online interaction with their colleagues, reflective blogging needs to be introduced and promoted as a professional development activity during teacher pre-service education.

Reflecting on teaching practices, conducting action research, and presenting findings in conferences or teacher meetings provide opportunities to use English meaningfully for communication and for improving teaching. Teacher training institutions in Hanoi such as Vietnam National University, and Hanoi University and non-governmental organizations like the US Embassy and British Council frequently organize teacher training workshops, conferences, and seminars. Social media like Facebook and LinkedIn also are active in connecting teachers with ELT experts, promoting events related to English learning and teaching in Vietnam. These events provide not only an environment for those who want to use English more, but also a chance to broaden the professional network and connects with other teachers and experts in the field.

## **Conclusion**

NFL Project 2020, a long-term project, shows the Vietnamese government's ambition and willingness to invest more in education, revising the curriculum and examination system. While waiting for these changes to take effect, each teacher and institution can contribute to improving the current situation. As they are at the centre of the educational reform, they play a very important role. Unless teachers recognize the need to improve their proficiency and want

to change, no improvement can be made. Each teacher needs to be more active and willing to make time in their busy schedules for English development activities. Meanwhile, the government, MOET and individual schools need to create and promote more favourable work conditions. It is essential for educators, policy makers, and researchers to get into individual teachers' shoes, to understand how different teaching contexts and various difficulties are hindering professional development. Without this knowledge, it is hard to formulate an appropriate working plan to support teachers' practical needs.

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### **Appendix 1: Questions used in semi-structured interviews**

- What do you think is the minimum level of English language proficiency needed to teach at your level (primary/ lower secondary/ upper secondary)? Why do you think so?
- Is it important for teachers to maintain and develop their language proficiency? How could teachers do so? What have you done?
- Do you think your pre-service teacher-training program has prepared you well (in terms of language proficiency) for the current teaching job? If not, how could such a program improve?
- Do you think it is necessary to provide in-service teachers with language improvement programs? What kind of program do you think will be effective? How can such a program help?
- What do you think are the possible reasons for the limitations of English language proficiency of Vietnamese teachers in general? And for you?
- Additional follow-up questions were asked on the basis of interviewee responses.

# **English-medium instruction in Turkish higher education: The current state of English in psychology departments**

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## **Abstract**

English-medium instruction in non-English speaking countries has gained prominence around the world in the last decades due to the internationalization of higher education but the way English is used in higher education varies. To investigate this further, we focused particularly on the use of English in psychology departments across Turkish universities because psychology is one of the fields in which English is the dominant language globally. Data were collected from official reports and from 287 psychology students who evaluated the use of English in their programs by responding to a questionnaire. English was the medium of instruction in 31 out of 79 programs (about 40%) of all offered undergraduate psychology degrees in Turkey in 2015, but their measures for students' proficiency varied. Students reported that the amount of English used in their classes did not change over the course of their undergraduate psychology program. Students also stated that their comprehension level increased during their study. They also reported that some core courses should be taught or supported by materials in Turkish. The results showed that as the internationalization of higher education continues increasing, so does English-medium instruction especially in the fields such as psychology.

**Keywords:** English-medium instruction, Turkey, teaching of psychology, World Englishes

## **Introduction**

The spread of English is an unprecedented global phenomenon and its effects can be observed in many areas, from science to education to business (Crystal, 1997). One of the consequences of the pervasive presence of English in various educational contexts and countries is the emergence and rapid development of English-medium instruction (EMI) at universities around the world. The use of EMI at the university level in countries where English is not a native language has become more prominent due to the internationalization of higher education (Altbach & Knight, 2007). Research on the status and impact of English in general and EMI in particular indicates that there is a great amount of variation among non-English-speaking countries (Doiz et al., 2013; Nunan, 2003). Because of the pervasive role of English internationally,

the rapid spread of EMI as a result, and the wide heterogeneity of EMI practices around the world, it is imperative that more research be conducted in order to document the status of and processes at play with respect to EMI around the world, especially considering the wide range of stakeholders, from students and teachers to administrators and policy makers, as well as the high stakes surrounding EMI.

Yet, previous research indicated that the use of EMI at the university level was not homogeneous, suggesting that there were disciplinary differences between programs (Block & Cameron, 2002). Our previous research (Arik & Arik, 2014), too, showed that, as an expanding circle country (Dogancay-Aktuna & Kiziltepe, 2005), following the global trend, English is currently the medium of instruction in Turkish universities for around 50% of the programs in some subjects, such as engineering and English. One could argue that these subjects are easier to teach in a second language than are subjects related to social sciences and other humanities, where high proficiency levels in all domains of English are expected. To investigate this in the present study, we first focus particularly on the use of English in psychology departments across Turkish universities because it was documented that psychology is one of the fields in which English is the dominant language (Groddol, 1997). We then evaluate attitudes of psychology students of these departments toward EMI. Our findings indicated that English is the medium of instruction in about 40% of all offered undergraduate psychology degrees in Turkey. Moreover, students reported that the amount of English used in classes remained the same over the course of an undergraduate psychology program. According to students' self reports, comprehension level of students increased during their study. They also reported that some core courses should be taught or supported by materials in Turkish.

### **Higher education in Turkey**

Higher education in Turkey has been transformed considerably in the last decade in line with the Turkish Vision for 2023, which maintains the goal that Turkey will be among the most developed countries by 2023, and the Bologna Process (<http://www.ehea.info/>), which has 47 members, including Turkey, to establish standards for higher education across Europe so as to internationalize European higher education. The Vision for 2023 focuses not only on the development of the Turkish economy but also on technology and education. To actualize the goals posited in this document, the Higher Education Council (YÖK) encourages public and private sectors establish new public and foundation universities as well as let established and new universities offer new undergraduate and graduate degrees. Nevertheless, the newly established universities did not often have adequate infrastructure in terms of teaching facilities, libraries, labs, and, perhaps most importantly, academics (Kavili Arap, 2010; OECD, 2011; TÜBİTAK, 2005; YÖK, 2007).

As a result of several incentives by the government the number of universities was doubled just in eight years; there were 107 universities in 2007 and 194 in 2015. But it is questionable if the quality of education could keep up with such drastic increase in numbers. Following the Turkish Vision for 2023 and the Bologna Process, English as the language of instruction has often been encouraged to internationalize Turkish higher education so that now English is the medium of instruction in about 20% of all offered undergraduate degrees in Turkey (Arik & Arik, 2014). There has been an increase in both the number of EMI universities (Büyükkantarıcı, 2004) and the number of students at foundation universities with EMI (Kırkgöz, 2009), which, we observe, is still the tendency. Nevertheless, according to the British Council Report in 2015, English teaching in Turkish higher education is below expectations.

It is worth investigating students and teachers' views on EMI. Recent research has shown that students at Bilkent University, a private university in Ankara, are satisfied with EMI in Turkish universities but they are not satisfied with the language policies and practices at the universities, especially with regard to the materials used in class (Karakaş, 2017). Another study was conducted with the participation of 13 lecturers from three EMI universities in Turkey to investigate to what extent teachers use their mother tongue, Turkish, in their classes. The results showed that most of those lecturers were in favor of using Turkish to support the EMI classes (Karakaş, 2016).

## **Method**

We examined the use of English as the medium of instruction in psychology programs in Turkey, first to see if Turkey was able to reach its goals as stated in the Turkish Vision for 2023 as part of the Bologna Process and second to document the practices and perceptions regarding EMI in psychology programs, especially because psychology has been established as one of the most English dominant disciplines in previous literature.

Our research questions were the following:

- (1) How many programs in psychology are currently offered in universities in Turkey?
- (2) What are the languages of instruction in those programs?
- (3) How are proficiency levels of students measured in those programs? Are there any English support courses offered in the curricula?
- (4) How do students evaluate the use of English in EMI programs in psychology?

To answer the first three questions, we collected data from the Turkish Student Selection and Placement Center (ÖSYM) and the websites of Turkish universities. ÖSYM, run by the government, is the only organization that administers the National Placement Tests in Turkey. Every year, ÖSYM

publishes booklets about the university entrance exams that include information about the universities and their departments. We focused on the ÖSYM reports from 1996 on. The websites of Turkish universities include detailed information about the departments and curriculum according to the Bologna Process. We visited the websites occasionally from 2013 on and focused on their current forms by May 2016.

To answer the last question, we prepared a questionnaire, approved by the ethics committee, in which we asked psychology students to evaluate the instructions and learning opportunities they received in the departments where the language of instruction was English. By using either a 5-point Likert type scale or yes-no questions, the students were asked whether their classes were offered in English (in practice), to what extent they could follow the classes, whether their class materials and exams were in English. The questionnaire was online and in Turkish. 285 students participated in this study (gender: 233 female, 51 male, 1 no-answer; age:  $M = 22.26$ ,  $SD = 2.74$ ).

## Results

Psychology education lasts four academic years in Turkey. Before graduation, a student must have completed at least 240 ECTS (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System) credits, which are roughly equivalent to 1,800 hours for classes over the four years. Students are offered either a Bachelor of Arts (BA) or Bachelor of Science (BSc) degree, which gives them the right to hold the title of “psychologist”. This title allows graduates to work as psychologists at hospitals, schools, mental institutions, counseling centers, special education centers, and prisons, among others. All of the programs in psychology offer regular classes with the exception of the programs at Yildirim Beyazit University, which offers regular classes and night classes in two separate programs in psychology.

To address our first research question, we examined universities and their undergraduate programs in Turkey. Our findings showed that, as of 2015, there were 194 universities in Turkey. Of them, 72 offered undergraduate degrees in psychology (Appendix 1). The total number of programs in psychology was 79. We found that undergraduate education in psychology is highly affected by the Turkish Vision for 2023. Therefore, there has been an exponential increase in not only the number of programs offering psychology degrees (e.g., 10 in 1996, 58 in 2013, and 79 in 2015) but also in the number of students enrolled in those programs (e.g., 391 in 1996, 4,796 in 2014, and 5,809 in 2015). Table 1 displays these changes year by year. Therefore, the findings not only showed the number of psychology programs (79) in relation to all undergraduate programs (41%), but also that there has been a substantial increase in the number of psychology programs.

### ***The languages of instruction***

To address our second research question, we investigated the languages used in these psychology programs. We found that the universities in Turkey offer three types of education in terms of the language of instruction: 1) all of the psychology courses are offered in Turkish; 2) all of the psychology courses are offered in English; and 3) 30% of the psychology courses (usually courses related to Statistics, Research Methods, and Introduction to Psychology) are offered in English, while the remainder are in Turkish.

We found that, of the 79 programs in psychology, English is the medium of instruction in about 40% of all offered undergraduate psychology degrees in Turkey (31 out of 79 programs in 2015). A total of 30% of psychology courses are offered in English in four programs. The language of the instruction in the remaining 44 programs is Turkish only. Table 2 provides the names of the Turkish universities offering a BA or a BSc degree in psychology, their ownership, and the languages of instruction.

As the number of universities in Turkey changes rapidly, the number of programs offered in Turkish or English change. In 2014, there were 70 programs in 63 departments of psychology. Of them, 43 programs were in Turkish and a few in 30% English, while 27 programs were entirely in English. In 2015, seven universities offered two separate programs in psychology. One conducted classes in Turkish and the other in English. In 2014, there were six such departments. Overall, the findings indicated that a large percentage of psychology programs in Turkey were in either completely or partially in English. The findings also supported the claim that psychology is one of the disciplines that English is prevalent as the medium of instruction (citation). Our previous research (citation) has demonstrated that around 20% of all undergraduate programs in Turkey were conducted in English, but as can be seen the percentage for psychology programs is 40%, and the numbers have been increasing.

### ***Preparatory schools and English support***

To address our third research question, we explored how universities evaluate psychology students' proficiencies in English. We found that students should pass an institution-based English proficiency exam or document their proficiency level according to their TOEFL or IELTS scores. Those who fail will enroll at an English preparatory school for an academic year. Currently, only one university, Koç University, administers an institutional TOEFL test.

Table 1

*The number of universities with a psychology department and the total number of enrollments in Turkey*

Year	Number of Universities with a Psychology Department	Total Number of Enrollments	Enrollments per Department
2015	72	5,809	80.68
2014	64	4,796	74.94
2013	58	4,361	75.19
2012	51	3,598	70.55
2011	42	2,755	65.6
2010	34	2,128	62.59
2009	30	1,921	64.03
2008	30	1,770	59
2007	26	1,192	45.85
2006	23	1,035	45
2005	22	954	43.36
2004	19	779	41
2003	16	654	40.88
2002	14	566	40.43
2001	13	512	39.38
2000	13	489	37.62
1999	11	393	35.73
1998	11	488	44.36
1997	11	509	46.27
1996	10	391	39.1

Nevertheless, most of the departments continue offering mandatory courses to support freshmen and sophomores' academic English. The names of these courses vary, and include Academic English, English for Psychology, Reading and Speaking Skills, Skills in English, and Academic Writing in English.

### *Student evaluations*

To address our final research question, we prepared a questionnaire and asked students a series of questions. A total of 287 students participated in this online questionnaire. They were from 24 different programs (24 out of 31, but not equally distributed), thus representing most of the EMI psychology programs in Turkey at the time of data collection. There were 36 freshmen, 69 sophomores, 86 juniors, and 96 seniors. There were 8 missing responses out of 861. Table 2 gives the descriptive statistics from the Likert-type scale (see also Figures 1 and 2).

Table 2

*Descriptives of students' evaluations of the use of English in their programs (scores between 0-4)*

	Courses		Instructors		Comprehension	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Freshman	3.39	0.14	3.44	0.1	2.52	0.17
Sophomore	3.34	0.09	3.37	0.07	2.6	0.11
Junior	3.22	0.09	3.3	0.08	2.79	0.11
Senior	3.34	0.07	3.41	0.06	2.98	0.1

We then excluded scores from the freshmen because most of the classes were common core courses during the freshmen year and the number of the freshmen in our sample was relatively low. A two-way 3x3 ANOVA test (Class: sophomore, junior, senior x Evaluation Type) indicated that there was main effects of Class,  $F(737,2) = 3.632$ ,  $p = .02$ , and Evaluation Type,  $F(737,2) = 32.83$ ,  $p < .001$ , but no interaction. Tukey post-hoc analyses showed that the seniors' evaluation scores were significantly higher than those of the juniors' scores ( $p = .02$ ), but not the sophomores ( $p > .05$ ). The scores of the juniors and the sophomores did not differ from one another ( $p > .05$ ). Tukey post-hoc analyses also showed that the scores for following classes in English were significantly lower than those for classes in English,  $p < .001$ , and proficiency of the instructors,  $p < .001$ . The latter two did not differ from each other ( $p > .05$ ). These results indicated that the use of English in classes and by instructors do not change over the course of an undergraduate psychology program. Yet the comprehension level of students increases during their study according to students' self-reports.

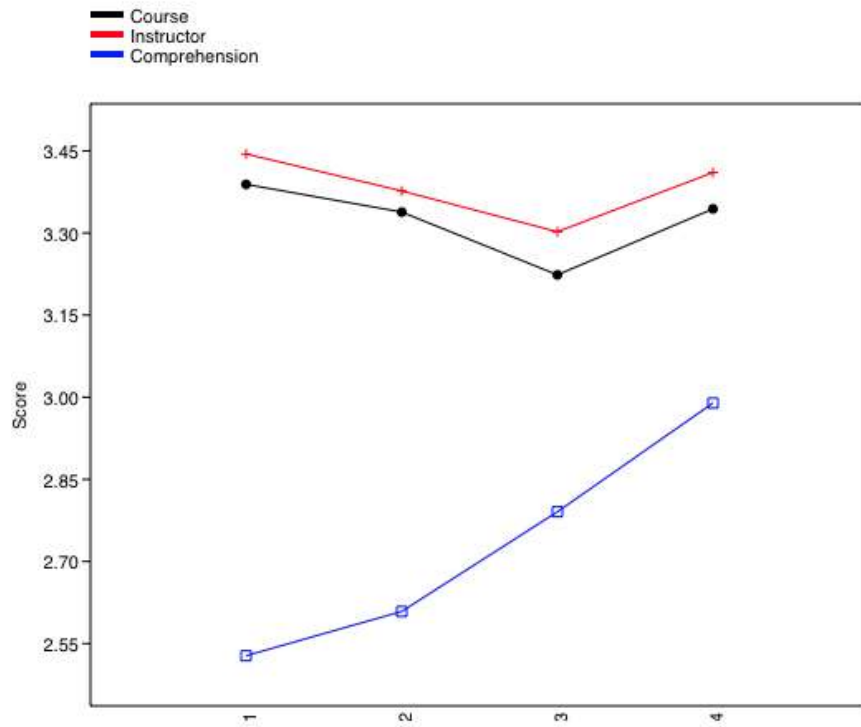


Figure 1. Means of scores for the type of evaluations by class.

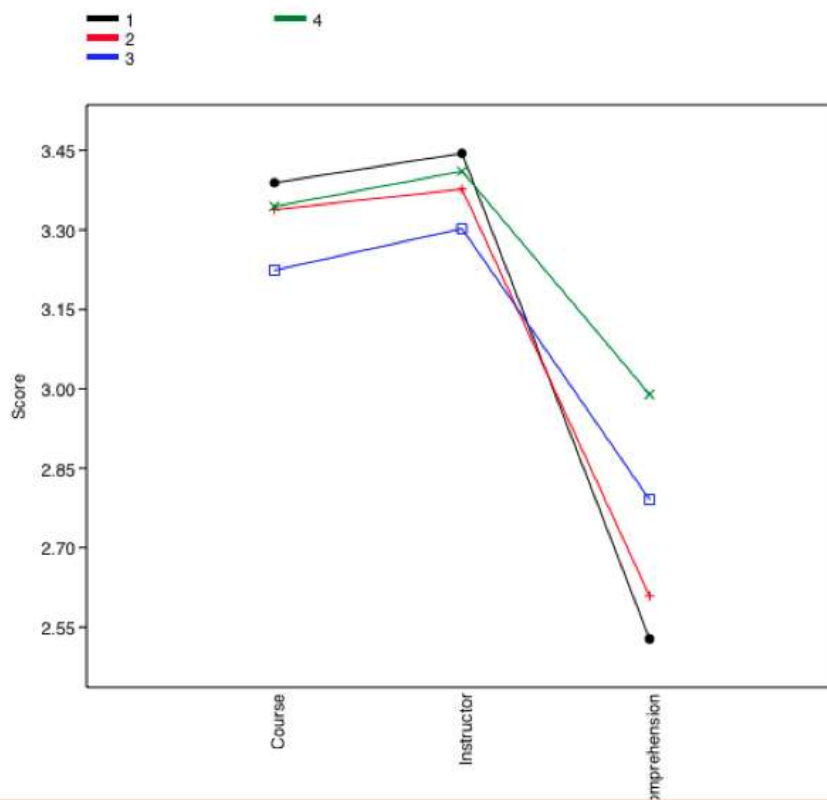


Figure 2. Means of scores for classes by the type of evaluations

The participants were also asked to report the use of English in their classes. They reported that most of the course materials, almost all of the exams, and a large percentage of written assignments and presentations were in English (Table 3). The results suggested that although not 100% correct, the representation of English use in university courses as presented on university websites and ÖSYM data was for the large part accurate. The data showed that some of the written and spoken assignments (10-15%) prepared by students were in Turkish. This might be due to the fact that students' English proficiency, especially in productive skills (writing and speaking), was not up to the challenge of using English as the medium of instruction all the time.

Table 3  
*Students' evaluations of the use of English in their programs (Yes-No questions)*

	Yes	Some	No	Missing response
Course materials in English	263 (91.6%)	21 (7.3%)	0	3 (1.1%)
Exams in English	277 (96.5%)	9 (3.1%)	0	1 (0.4%)
Written homework in English	254 (88.5%)	31 (10.8%)	0	2 (0.7%)
Student presentations in English	237 (82.6%)	43 (14.9%)	5 (1.7%)	2 (0.7%)

We also asked students' opinions as to whether there should be any classes offered in Turkish even though the language of instruction is English. A total of 117 out of 287 participants responded to this open-ended question, and 10 of them (8.5%) said there should be no classes in Turkish whereas 11 of them (9.4%) said all of the classes should be offered only in Turkish. Another 15 students (12.8%) said some of the courses should be supported by Turkish, e.g. during discussions, providing examples, and review for exams.

Many students named specific courses that should be taught in Turkish. All of the core courses were mentioned at least once but the most frequently mentioned courses were Psychopathology (25 students, 21.3%), Clinical Psychology (24 students, 20.5%), Research Methods or Interview Skills or Assessment (14 students, 11.9%) and Statistics or SPSS (14 students, 11.9%).

## Conclusion

Higher education in Turkey has drastically changed in recent years due to the Turkish Vision for 2023 and Turkey's involvement in the Bologna Process. The number of universities and the number of enrollments have increased exponentially to gain more prominence in the world, leading to an internationalization of Turkey's higher education. In this article, we showed the effects of the internationalization of Turkey's higher education on the languages of instruction in psychology departments in the Turkish universities. We found that there is an exponential increase in the number of psychology programs, which suggests that university administrators and language and psychology instructors might consider how to best meet the demands of this growing population, in addition to findings ways to provide quality education that can match this drastic quantitative increase. We also found that the classes in the psychology programs in Turkish universities are conducted either in Turkish (55%) or in English (40%), a percentage significantly higher than the role of English in other undergraduate programs in Turkey (20%) as showed in Arik and Arik (2014). We also observed a trend in terms of language choice towards more psychology programs in English. Over the last couple of years, the percentage of EMI psychology programs has increased compared to that of Turkish psychology programs. There is also an interesting trend in which 30% of the courses in some of the psychology programs are conducted in English. This might be considered either a transitional phase until the language proficiency of the students improve in general, or a synthesis of multiple and often conflicting demands of various parties, such as market forces, global influence of English, educational policies of Turkey, and available resources.

We found that the English preparatory schools mostly use institutional tests or TOEFL scores to measure the language proficiency of psychology students. Our findings showed that even after students pass these tests and continue their college education, many of these programs continue offering English support classes. When these results are compared to the perceptions of the students, it gets clear that the placements scores required by the universities might be too low for students to function successfully in their classes conducted in English. Furthermore, even though many universities provide English support, many students do not seem to be satisfied with the level of support they receive. Needless to say, students' perception is only one of the perspectives to be taken into account when making university level policy decisions.

The findings suggest that there is a close relationship between educational/language policies, such as the Bologna Process and the Turkish Vision for 2023, and practices. Thus, administrators and language instructors should keep an eye on these national and international developments in language policy to meet the changing needs and demands of the students. It will be particularly interesting to observe if and how Turkish higher education

policies might change as a result of the negative political relationship between the EU and Turkey in recent couple of years. The findings also imply that quantitative measures, such as the number of programs offered in Turkish and English, might not always reflect the perceptions of students involved and the quality of EMI. Nevertheless, such studies are a good and necessary starting point for further investigation.

In the present study, we asked students to evaluate the use of English in classes, by instructors, and their comprehension levels, i.e. to what extent they could follow the classes and understand the course materials. We found that there was no difference in the way English was used in the class materials, during the class, and by the instructors throughout undergraduate study. Based on these findings, it appears that the reason underlying the difficulty of comprehension is not the instructors. Therefore, it can be more effective to allocate available resources to infrastructure and pedagogical materials as suggested by Karakaş (2016, 2017). It can also be more effective if educators and policy makers consider a more developmental approach, for example, allowing the use of Turkish more, at least in supplementary materials, in the first year of study and increasing the use of English over time.

This developmental approach might be more in line with the needs of the students as suggested by our findings regarding comprehension levels. We found students' comprehension levels, i.e. to what extent they could follow the classes and understand course materials, increase as the years pass during their undergraduate study. Nevertheless, students also reported that some, if not all, of the courses should be supported by Turkish, e.g. during discussion sessions, with the help of Turkish terms corresponding to the terms in English. This finding is parallel to the perceptions of teachers as reported by Karakaş (2016) in that teachers, too, express a need to use Turkish in classes, at least to a certain extent, to help students. We found that some students even advocated for having particular courses in Turkish such as core courses, interview skills, research methods, and classes teaching the use of statistical programs in psychology such as SPSS. Although it is understandable that psychology students who are planning to work in the Turkish institutions after they graduate prefer to have basic communicative skills and disciplinary vocabulary in Turkish to talk about their work and communicate with their clients, employers, and colleagues, it is worth considering to what extent and in which particular domains English and Turkish would serve the students' needs best. We need more research in order to answer questions. For example, What are the job descriptions and needs of professional psychologists in Turkey? To what extent do they correspond to the psychology education? Is it more effective to prepare students to use English before they get to the higher education level, for example, with better English education in high school or preparatory school? Should instructors follow more transitional pedagogical approaches throughout undergraduate study? What is the best way to provide English support to these students?

This study answered our research questions however it also raised new ones. For example, it remains an open question, which we currently investigate, as to whether students' use of English increase in terms of the traditional four domains of proficiency: Speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Our results suggest that even receptive language skills (readings and listening) of psychology students in Turkey might not be up to the challenge of using English in the classroom since students expressed some difficulty following courses. Since students do not attribute this to the language proficiency of their instructors, one question to investigate is what the underlying reason for their perceived difficulty is. Possible explanations include the quality of previous language education including preparatory schools in the universities, low student motivation, or a mismatch between the perceptions of students and their actual level of proficiency. Considering the fact that productive language skills often develop slower than receptive skills, it is safe to assume that students might need even more support and more time to develop their productive skills. Who should be responsible for that support is an open question, where the answers will most likely vary from high school language teachers, students and parents, language institutions, writing centers, universities, and psychology programs. Another question for future research is to what extent students' perceptions reflect the reality of their experiences, proficiencies, and needs. We currently investigate in EMI in psychology, as to whether English preparatory schools and students' language proficiency are below expectations as the British Council Report in 2015 claimed about higher education in Turkey.

It is an undeniable reality that English is an international language and that is the reason we need more research about this unprecedented phenomenon with far reaching consequences. Previous research has repeatedly shown that the spread of English as an international language is not linear or equal in different countries, domains, or disciplines as this study also provides supporting evidence. Considering the diversity of experiences with English as an international language, it is imperative that we document a wide range of experiences so that we can reach a more in-depth and nuanced understanding of English as an international language, and learn from not only trials and tribulations but also triumphs and successes of dedicated students, language professionals, administrators, and policy makers.

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**Appendix 1. Turkish universities with a psychology department and their languages of instruction**

Turkish Universities with a Psychology Department	Public/Foundation	Language of Instruction
Abant Izzet Baysal University	Public	Turkish
Acibadem University	Foundation	Turkish
Adnan Menderes University	Public	Turkish
Akdeniz University	Public	Turkish
Ankara University	Public	Turkish
Atilim University	Foundation	English
Avrasya University	Foundation	Turkish
Bahcesehir University	Foundation	English
Baskent University	Foundation	Turkish
Beykent University	Foundation	Turkish
Bingol University	Public	Turkish
Bogazici University	Public	English
Canik Basari University <sup>x</sup>	Foundation	Turkish
Cumhuriyet University	Public	Turkish
Cag University	Foundation	English
Cankaya University	Foundation	English
Cukurova University	Public	Turkish
Dogus University	Foundation	English
Dokuz Eylul University	Public	30% English
Ege University	Public	30% English
Fatih Sultan Mehmet Foundation University	Foundation	Turkish
Fatih University <sup>x</sup>	Foundation	Turkish
Gediz University <sup>x</sup>	Foundation	Turkish
Hacettepe University	Public	Turkish
Halic University	Foundation	Turkish
Hasan Kalyoncu University	Foundation	Turkish
Isik University	Foundation	Turkish-English
Ihsan Dogramaci Bilkent University	Foundation	English
Ipek University <sup>x</sup>	Foundation	English

Istanbul 29 Mayıs University	Foundation	Turkish
Istanbul Arel University	Foundation	Turkish
Istanbul Aydın University	Foundation	Turkish
Istanbul Bilgi University	Foundation	English
Istanbul Bilim University	Foundation	Turkish
Istanbul Esenyurt University	Foundation	Turkish
Istanbul Gelisim University	Foundation	Turkish-English
Istanbul Kemerburgaz University	Foundation	English
Istanbul Kultur University	Foundation	Turkish
Istanbul Medipol University	Foundation	Turkish-English
Istanbul Sabahattin Zaim University	Foundation	Turkish-English
Istanbul Sehir University	Foundation	English
Istanbul Commerce University	Foundation	Turkish
Istanbul University	Public	Turkish
Izmir University of Economics	Foundation	English
Izmir Katip Celebi University	Public	Turkish
Izmir University <sup>x</sup>	Foundation	Turkish
Kadir Has University	Foundation	English
Koc University	Foundation	English
Maltepe University	Foundation	Turkish-English
MEF University	Foundation	English
Meliksah University <sup>x</sup>	Foundation	Turkish
Mersin University	Public	Turkish
Murat Hudavendigar University <sup>x</sup>	Foundation	Turkish
Nisantasi University	Foundation	Turkish-English
Nuh Naci Yazgan University	Foundation	Turkish
Okan University	Foundation	30% English
Ondokuz Mayıs University	Public	Turkish
Middle East Technical University	Public	English
Ozyegin University	Foundation	English
Sabancı University *	Foundation	English
Suleyman Sah University <sup>x</sup>	Foundation	English
TED University	Foundation	English

TOBB University of Economics and Technology	Foundation	Turkish
Toros University	Foundation	Turkish
Ufuk University	Foundation	Turkish
Uludag University	Public	30% English
Uskudar University	Foundation	Turkish-English
Yasar University	Foundation	English
Yeditepe University	Foundation	English
Yeni Yuzyil University	Foundation	Turkish
Yildirim Beyazit University	Public	Turkish-English (Night School)

Note: Those marked <sup>x</sup> were closed by the government due to the State of Emergency declared after the failed coup attempt in July 2016 in Turkey.

# **Fluidity and variation in lexical stress placement in Ghanaian English Discourse: A case for systematicity in communication in world Englishes**

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## **Abstract**

Lexical stress is recognized in the literature as an important feature in English interactions. For instance, Hahn (2004) and Field (2005) argue that misplaced stress may lead to comprehensibility and ultimately, communication problems. In spite of this acclaimed importance, Jenkins (2000) excludes lexical stress from the Lingua Franca Core (LFC), a set of features that speakers of English as a Lingua Franca should focus on because it does not hinder intelligibility in English communication. This study investigates lexical stress placement by speakers of Ghanaian English. Data consisting of 13 hours of English conversations from 200 Ghanaian university students were analyzed both auditorily and acoustically. Results suggest that similar to outer and expanding Englishes, Ghanaians show fluidity and variation in lexical stress placement. From the results, it is argued that stress placement appears to be systematic in both outer and expanding circle Englishes, and this does not appear to negatively affect intelligibility in communication in world Englishes. The paper also concludes that it is crucial for all speakers of English to become accustomed to one another's stress patterning in order to sound intelligible and comprehensible in communicating in world Englishes.

**Keywords:** Variability, fluidity, lexical stress, Ghanaian English, World Englishes

## **Introduction**

In English interactions, speakers employ different pronunciation features and cues within the context of interaction in order to communicate the meaning that they wish to convey to their interlocutors. One of such features is lexical stress. Lexical stress (or word stress) is a very prominent feature in interactions involving speakers of English. English is a lexical stress language (Cutler, 2012), as such, words with more than one syllable will exhibit some differences in their relative salience. This means that while some of the syllables may receive stress, others may not be stressed. Unlike in some languages (e.g. Akan, Finnish, Hungarian, or Polish), English words have varied stress across syllables, rather than having fixed positions. For example, in a word like PHOtograph, the first syllable has been stressed, while in phoTOgraphy, it is the second syllable that is stressed. Due to its variability,

stress in English may be phonemic, serving to distinguish meaning in words that are identical (cf. Honbolygo & Csépe, 2013; Kijak, 2009; Tremblay, 2007, 2008). For instance, the word *contest* may belong to two separate word classes depending on where the stress is placed. Thus, the placement of stress on one of the syllables in each case determines its meaning. This is exemplified in example (1):

1.     a)     CONtest    “noun”
- b)     conTEST   “verb”

The differences in the two words in (1) also suggest that lexical stress placement in English enables listeners to understand the nature of English syllables (Arciuli & Cupples, 2006), and as a result has the tendency to affect both intelligibility and comprehensibility. In fact, research (e.g. Field, 2005; Hahn, 2004) suggests that if lexical stress is misplaced, it may lead to miscommunication among speakers of English. This is because it has been found to be extremely crucial in intelligibility, especially in L2 English. Although lexical stress is said to be crucial for intelligibility, there is divided opinion over the exact extent of its effect. For example, while there are studies that argue that misplacing lexical stress impact negatively on intelligibility (e.g. Anderson-Hsieh, Johnson, & Koehler, 1992; Bond, 2005; Van Donselaar, Koster, & Cutler, 2005; Zielinski, 2008), there are others which claim that stress misplacement has little or no effect on intelligibility (e.g. Cooper, Cutler, & Wales, 2002). For instance, Lepage and Busà (2014) found that incorrect stress placement and vowel reduction affected intelligibility among their French and Italian learners of English. The authors observed that intelligibility was hugely affected with a combination of misplaced lexical stress and a change in vowel quality. In another study, Field (2005) also argues that incorrect stress placement in words is likely to lead to serious communication problems for both native and non-native listeners.

While the present study recognizes that there may be a relationship between lexical stress placement and intelligibility, this is not its focus. Specifically, it examines lexical stress placement by speakers of Ghanaian English in everyday natural conversations. Overall, results suggest that speakers in this variety of English tend to show a lot of variability and fluidity in the way they assign lexical stress. For instance, in one and the same word, the first syllable is stressed as in *TEAcher*, and there are also instances where the second syllable is stressed as in *teaCHER*. As the results show, Ghanaian speakers of English show both similarities with and differences from the way inner circle speakers (Kachru, 1986) assign lexical stress. It is based on these findings that the present study advocates that speakers of English might have to understand one another's stress patterns in order to find their speech intelligible during interactions in English as an international language (EIL). The next section describes the concept of lexical stress in English, with a

discussion of some studies on its placement in some non-native Englishes. The third section discusses the method employed in the selection of participants, data collection, and data analysis to obtain the results. This is followed by the fourth section with a discussion of the results while the fifth and final section presents the conclusion of the study.

### **Lexical stress in English**

Stress is a very significant prosodic feature in English in that it has many functions, which all contribute to the rhythm of one's speech and also contributes to meaning making in utterances. In all the languages of the world, stress is cued by certain features. These features can be morphological, syntactical, or phonological (Büding, 2009; Gössel & Özsoy, 2003). For example, Laver (1994) notes that "the phonetic manifestation of stress varies from language to language with some (such as English) exploring all four parameters of pitch, loudness, duration and quality" (p. 511). In addition to Laver, Ladefoged and Johnson (2011) also observe that stress in English is cued by intensity, vowel quality, and pitch. While there is no intention to wade into the issues surrounding how many features English use in cuing stress, it is recognized that phonologically, a syllable can be stressed, usually, with one or a combination of any two, three or all of the four features identified by Laver (1994). To relate these features to stress, Matthews (2007) defines stress as a "phonological feature by which a syllable is heard as more prominent than others" (p. 383). There is abundance of studies that have examined the acoustic correlates of stress in the literature (Sluijter & Heuven, 1997; Sluijter, Heuven, & Pacilly, 1997). It is important to emphasize here that the present study does not rely on the measures obtained for the acoustic cues; the cues are only referred to where necessary, but not the values obtained. A distinction here is also made between stress and prominence. Stress here refers to lexical stress (or word stress) while prominence refers to sentence (or phrasal stress) or nuclear stress. The present study focuses on lexical stress and so sentence stress is not discussed.

Lexical stress performs different functions in English as well as in all other languages. For example, Grosjean and Gee (1987) note that stressed syllables contribute to word segmentation. This is because speakers will rely on the combination of strong and weak syllables to create divisions at certain points within the stream of speech, thereby segmenting the words into their respective words and syllables. They further intimate that listeners also use the stressed syllables for lexical search; that is, to activate the set of all candidates that contain that syllable and then use the feedback to contribute to the identification of weak syllables. Because of this function, Field (2005) claims that if stress is wrongly distributed, a listener who uses it to locate words within a connected speech may encounter problems doing so. Another function of stress is that it aids in determining the profiles of words. That is, speakers can look at the stressed syllable in a word and determine which word

class it belongs to. An example is the difference between words such as imPORT and IMport, conVERT and CONvert, or INsult and inSULT. With these, it is easier for one to separate the verbs (imPORT, conVERT, inSULT) from the nouns (IMport, CONvert, INsult). Lexical stress also serves a contrastive function in that it helps both speakers and listeners to distinguish between words that are semantically distinct (Friederici, Friedrich, & Christophe, 2007; Honbolygo & Csépe, 2013; Kijak, 2009).

From the functions outlined, it is clear that lexical stress is crucial in English interactions. However, research suggests that not all English speakers use this feature as might be expected, for instance, by inner circle listeners, and this might pose problems as far as speech intelligibility is concerned. For example, Low (2000) investigated the use of stress placement among Singapore English speakers and compared with that of British English speakers. From her findings, she observed that her participants did not differ significantly from their British counterparts. She however observed that there were differences noted for stress placement in compounds and noun phrases. That is, while Singaporeans chose to stress the second syllable in compounds and noun phrases, the British English speakers marked stress as might be expected. Using 90 undergraduate Americans as listeners, Hahn (2004) played the recordings of one Korean international teaching assistant reading a text with (a) the correct stress, (b) the stress incorrectly placed, and (c) the stress completely absent. From her results, Hahn concludes that “when listening to speech with correct primary stress, the participants recalled significantly more content and evaluated the speaker significantly more favorably than when primary stress was aberrant or missing” (p. 201). Finally, Lepage and Busà (2014) examined stress placement among Canadian French and Italian speakers of English. Specifically, they sought to determine how incorrect stress placement alone or with vowel reduction impacts the intelligibility of the English spoken by these two groups. Using native speakers as listeners, the results obtained suggested that both incorrect stress and vowel quality negatively affected the intelligibility of Canadian French-accented and Italian-accented English. They concluded that although stress misplacement was detrimental to intelligibility, incorrect vowel reduction appeared to be more detrimental. In all these studies (and some other studies), one notices that the results were compared with the patterns exhibited by inner circle speakers, thus, making them appear as the *judges* of what is *right* and what is *wrong*. This way, the outer circle (Canadian French and Singapore) or expanding circle (Italian and Korean) (Kachru, 1986) speakers were seen not to conform to the *norm* because some of their patterns were different.

There are also studies that have focused solely on only outer circle or expanding circle contexts. An example is Simo Bobda (2010), who examined the strategies used by Cameroonians and Nigerians to cope with the complexity of English word stress. From his data, he found that stress placement is similar among these two groups and concluded that some strategies such as backward stressing, and noun-verb stress alternation are a

reflection of the speakers' knowledge of some general rules in English, and others like noun-verb alternation, final obstruent verbal stress, and affix stress property, are automatically generated by the indigenized varieties of the English of these speakers. With these, he argued that both speakers and listeners did not appear to have any communication problems during interactions. In another study, Mahmood, Zahid, and Sattar (2011) conducted a study on the acoustic correlates of lexical stress in Pakistani English. They recorded 20 graduate students whose first language is Punjabi and subjected the data to acoustic analysis. Their analysis revealed that Pakistani English speakers do not follow native pronunciation patterns, but rather, their production appears to be influenced by their native languages. From their findings, they concluded that Pakistani English is a separate variety just like other varieties such as Australian English or Sri Lankan English. The patterns of stress placement exhibited in the studies reviewed suggest that there is systematicity and consistency in the way speakers mark lexical stress in their English pronunciation.

Although studies abound on the way some outer and expanding circle English speakers place lexical stress, there is no known study on the way speakers of Ghanaian English do this. The present study is the first of its kind in Ghanaian English and thus reveals the patterns of lexical stress placement and shows that there is variability and fluidity in the way they do it. Such a study is crucial in the sense that it contributes to the understanding of the pronunciation features of Ghanaian English. In addition, the study adds a new dimension, that is, the fluidity with which speakers of this variety assign stress, to the on-going discussion of the way lexical stress is marked in English contexts outside the inner circle, and consequently fills a gap in the literature, particularly by expanding existing knowledge on how this pronunciation feature is used. Finally, it is relevant to the knowledge of Englishes in that it proves that there is systematicity in the way speakers of world Englishes use lexical stress and so they are not likely to encounter intelligibility problems. This study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the patterns shown in the way speakers of Ghanaian English assign lexical stress, and how are they compared to results from other studies on non-native English varieties?
2. Based on the findings, how are these patterns likely to affect communication in world Englishes?

## **Methodology**

### ***Participants***

The data analyzed for this study come from a corpus of 100,000 words. This corpus is made up of conversations recorded from 200 university students from a public university in Ghana comprising 100 males and 100 females with

ages ranging between 18 and 40 years. These participants were chosen because of their experience with the English language. That is, they had received instruction in English from primary school to the university level and so they were better at using it both in writing and speech than those at the lower levels. One such area of use is in discussions, class group and pair work, and in reading. All participants indicated that their English proficiency levels ranged between intermediate and high. The students represented all the major Ghanaian languages studied in school which constitutes about 96% of the entire Ghanaian population (Ghana Statistical Service GSS 2012). As such, they can be considered to be a representative of all educated Ghanaians. The Ghanaian languages represented here are Akan, Ewe, GaDangme, Gonja, Dagbani, Dagaare, Gurene, Nzema, and Kasem. All the participants indicated that they are fluent in their respective languages. During the recruitment process, most of the students were identified informally by verbal means while a few were contacted by email messages. The choice of participants was to ensure that only students offering Ghanaian languages were recruited. It should be noted that no English or French students were included in order to prevent them transferring their knowledge of English prosody into their conversations. After the purpose of the study was communicated to them, the participants signed consent forms to take part voluntarily without coercion or the promise of any reward.

### ***Data collection***

After giving their consent, the students were divided into groups according to their languages. In order to capture as much information from every participant, each group comprised five students, resulting in 40 groups for all 200 students. Each group sat round a conference table for the recording process. Once settled, each group was given a discussion prompt that borders on an important and controversial national issue of interest to both students and teachers. After they read through the prompt, a Crown Sound Grabber II PZM Condenser Microphone connected to an Olympus digital voice recorder was placed in the middle of the conference table for the recording. In order to ensure confidentiality and non-interference, only the participants were left in the room. The room was very quiet and this was to ensure that the microphone captured only the voices of the participants. The quietness of the room also ensured that the recordings obtained were of high quality. Each recording session lasted 20 minutes and this gave a total of 13 hours and 20 minutes of data.

### ***Data analysis***

The recordings were first transcribed orthographically. In this instance, they were played back to facilitate the orthographic transcription. After this, all prominent syllables were marked. The data were transferred onto a

computerized speech laboratory (CSL) for acoustic analysis. It is acknowledged that tone unit boundaries are not easy to identify (Couper-Kuhlen & Selting, 1996). This is because as Tench (1996) notes, it is our perception of how we semantically and syntactically organize information that serves as a cue to the demarcation of a stream of speech into units. There are different prosodic cues that may signal tone units, for example, Du Bois, Schuetze-Coburn, Paolino, & Cumming (1992) list: a) coherent contour, b) [pitch] reset, c) pause (typically between two units), d) anacrusis, and e) [syllable] lengthening. Using one or a combination of some of the features identified by Du Bois, Schuetze-Coburn, Paolino, and Cumming (1992), tone units were identified demarcated. After this, duration, intensity, and pitch (or fundamental frequency) values for the stressed syllables were measured, while pause durations were also marked for all tone units.

To ensure inter-rater reliability, 20% of the total transcripts was checked and re-checked rigorously by a trained phonetician of more than 15 years. For the purposes of the present study, the test comprised of the proper identification of tone units and properly-marked stressed syllables. Transcriber agreement was 82% for all items and this figure can be said to be very good because it is usually difficult even among trained phoneticians to establish a firm agreement especially in marking intonation. Where there were any real disagreements, they were resolved after discussions were held.

## **Results and discussion**

The analysis revealed that there were fluidity and variability in the way speakers assigned lexical stress. As would be shown, these do not only happen in monosyllabic words, but also in di- and polysyllabic words. In the following sections, I illustrate the assignment of lexical stress in different words in this variety of English.

### ***Full word stress***

The data analysis revealed that there were some words made up of more than one syllable that received full stress. This means that instead of having one of their syllables only stressed, speakers stress the whole word. Examples to illustrate this are as follows:

2. Sp 5: // even even even look at the TEACHERS //
3. Sp 4: // with er those who RECOMMENDED that the four year should  
go //
4. Sp 2: // as far as the STUDENTS //
5. Sp 1: // so er the PERFORMANCE //
6. Sp 2: // there will be ern ANOTHER //
7. Sp 3: // na- na- i ALWAYS look at them //

Examples 2-7 represent instances where speakers marked stress on full words, without selecting one syllable to mark the stress on. It is not clear why this was possible, but it can be speculated that it may be due to the syllable structure of their languages. In Ghana, just like most West African languages, the languages are syllable-timed, that is, all syllables within a word are assigned the same amount of time (duration, amplitude, pitch, and vowel quality) in their production. In fact, when the acoustic cues were measured, the results revealed that all the syllables received the same amount of duration, amplitude, similar pitch levels, and all the vowels were produced as full vowels with no reduction. This way, it can be argued that speakers produced the words as if they were monosyllabic words, since they form a group of words that receive stress in full words.

### ***Disyllabic words***

#### *First syllable stress*

In disyllabic words, speakers showed fluidity in the way they mark stress in words. The fluidity is shown in the way they stress one syllable in some instances and shift it onto another in other instances. Examples 8-17 show instances where speakers marked stress on the first syllable of the word.

8. Sp 5: // and then some TEAchers' quarters //
9. Sp 2: // she didn't PERform well so she should go //
10. Sp 3: // you'll come and write the Exams //
11. Sp 1: // certain COURses //
12. Sp 5: // it means the money is a PROblem //
13. Sp 1: // i think you will be able to ask STUdents //
14. Sp 3: // you are able to CAPture //
15. Sp 2: // the PREssure on you //
16. Sp 1: // is that what we SEE in PRACtice //
17. Sp 4: // ii have u-h a staff MEMber //

Examples 8-17 show clearly that in the set of words presented, the first syllables are stressed irrespective of where it is supposed to be, especially as might be expected in inner circle Englishes. Measurements of the duration, amplitude, vowel quality, and pitch, again, revealed the following: in the case of examples 8 and 12, pitch and vowel quality were the determinants of the stress with the duration and amplitude not having any difference when compared with the second syllables. In examples 9, 10, and 11, there was a combination of higher pitch, duration, and vowel quality were used to show the difference between the stressed syllables and the unstressed ones.

### *Second syllable stress*

In examples 18-27, speakers marked stress on the second syllable of the words in examples 11-20. This is illustrated as follows:

18. Sp 2: // you see when you're talking about tea**CHERS** //
19. Sp 2: // you'll **SEE** that students per**FORM** //
20. Sp 2: // to pass your e**XAMS** //
21. Sp 5: // let's also look at teachers and cour**SES** being Offered in the various schools //
22. Sp 1: // is money shouldn't be a pro**BLEM** //
23. Sp 4: // the teacher knows that stu**DENTS** are always like that //
24. Sp 3: // you will cap**TURE** everything //
25. Sp 5: // they always put pre**SSURE** on you //
26. Sp 1: // is that what we see in prac**TICE** //
27. Sp 2: // you have a staff mem**BER** //

Examples 18-27 also show that the second syllables in the words were assigned stress irrespective of which syllables might be expected to be stressed. Similarly to the previous set, the acoustic cues duration, amplitude, and pitch were measured and the results showed that in comparison with the first syllable in each case, the second syllable had a combination of higher pitch and duration as the features that were used to cue stress. In both cases of stressed and unstressed syllables, vowel quality and amplitude did not show any difference. That is, duration measures were the same for both syllables in each word and their vowels were also produced as full vowels. In the analysis, it was observed that some speakers repeated their utterances with stress on the first syllable of a word at one time and on the second at another time. In fact, sometimes, the same speaker showed variability in the way they stressed the syllables. Instances are found in examples 9 and 19, 14 and 24, and 16 and 26. It should also be noted that apart from those who produced the same words with shifts in the stress, where same speakers appear in the examples, they are not the same people. For instance, speakers 5 in example 8 and speaker 5 in 15 are two different people and sometimes even belong to two different languages. It so happened that they are labeled with the same speaker in their respective transcripts.

### ***Polysyllabic words***

The data analysis revealed that it is not only in disyllabic words that speakers showed fluidity in the placement of stress, but also in polysyllabic words. In this case, the variability is seen in the way the stress is shifted from one syllable onto another. The assignment of stress in polysyllabic words is presented according to the number of syllables in the words. Accordingly, three-syllable words are presented first. This is followed with the discussion of four-syllable words, and finally, five-syllable words are discussed.

### **Three-syllable words**

#### ***First syllable stress***

The analysis showed that speakers have different ways of stressing syllables in three-syllable words. For example, the same word may receive stress on the first, second, or third syllable. In examples 28-32, some instances where the first syllable is stressed are shown:

- 28. Sp 1: // so that's why i'm saying that you have to CONsider those factors //
- 29. Sp 2: // it was the FOUNdation that gave me some money for my education //
- 30. Sp 4: // the PERformance differ from school to school //
- 31. Sp 3: // the teachers are always think the students DIfficult to teach //
- 32. Sp 1: // she later said that the work was COMpleted.

In these examples, the acoustic cues, pitch, duration, and amplitude were measured in order to determine which particular cue(s) is responsible for the stress. Examples 29, 30, and 31 had higher pitch being the feature that cued stress while the stress on examples 28 and 32 were cued by higher amplitude. In all cases, vowels were produced as full vowels.

#### ***Second syllable stress***

In the same words above, speakers stressed the second syllables. This is exemplified in 33-37.

- 33. Sp 1: // we are going to er conSIder //
- 34. Sp 5: // so that the founDAtion will be laid properly //
- 35. Sp 4: // cause of er poor perFORmance ///
- 36. Sp 3: // yeah they are important but not that diFFIcult compared to the //
- 37. Sp 2: // if you know that [hh] if i comPLEted //

### *Final syllable stress*

There were words, including some of those shown in 33-37, in which speakers stressed the third syllable. Some of these are illustrated in examples 38-47 as follows:

- 38. Sp 2: // consiDER the conditions //
- 39. Sp 2: // after we LAY the foundaTION //
- 40. Sp 1: // perforMANCE because er //
- 41. Sp 3: // some headmasters find it diffiCULT to //
- 42. Sp 1: // so when those people compleTED //
- 43. Sp 4: // because of the duraTION //
- 44. Sp 3: // sometimes you HAVE to get a aa head who is like dictaTOR  
//
- 45. Sp 1: // is actuaLLY let's come to the point when we are //
- 46. Sp 3: // can't you hear they say if you think education is expensive  
try  
                    ignoRANCE //
- 47. Sp 3: // you were er like a grasshoPPER //

In this last batch of three-syllable words, speakers shift the stress onto the third syllable irrespective of where it actually might be expected to be in inner circle Englishes. The acoustic measurements indicated higher pitch was used to cue stressed for all the syllables while all vowels (whether in stressed or unstressed syllables) were produced as full vowels.

### *Four-syllable words*

The four-syllable words also showed that speakers sometimes stressed on the first, second, third or fourth syllable.

### *First syllable stress*

Examples 48-52 are some instances where speakers stressed the first syllables of four-syllable words.

- 48. Sp 2: // INfrastructure //
- 49. Sp 4: // i've just told you that we did not get any UNderstanding in  
the  
                    subjects //
- 50. Sp 2: // you said teachers should INTensify the way they teach you the  
core subjects //
- 51. Sp 5: // the heads did not know how to Accommodate us at all //
- 52. Sp 2: // while the COmmunity schools do the four years //

### *Second syllable stress*

Speakers stressed the second syllables of four-syllable words as can be found in examples 53-57 follows:

- 53. sp 2: // the speed at which they are using will be will have to be  
inTENSified //
- 54. Sp 1: // er we don't have infrastructure deVELopment //
- 55. sp 4: // it is about the oRIENTation //
- 56. Sp 1: // the adVANtages of passing through the four years //
- 57. Sp 3: // when the three year was imPLEmented //

### *Third syllable stress*

Stress on the third syllables of four-syllable words is shown on some words in examples 58-62.

- 58. sp 4: // they have to be given a lot orienTAtion //
- 59. Sp 3: // infraSTRUcture i still stand by it //
- 60. Sp 1: // you don't know the disadVANtages in failing mathematics //
- 61. Sp 2: // your concenTRAtion will be on the electives //
- 62. Sp 5: // you you don't know my teacher was a respecTAbLe man //

### *Fourth syllable stress*

Stress on the fourth syllables (which are also the final syllables) of four-syllable words is shown on some words in examples 63-67.

- 63. Sp 3: // our headmaster in a way found it very difficult to  
accommoDATE people //
- 64. Sp 1: // maybe the infrastrucTURE the //
- 65. Sp 1: // there was infrastructure developMENT //
- 66. Sp 1: // uh in terms of proficienCY //
- 67. Sp 3: // you know the acadeMICS //

### *Five-syllable words*

There were few five-syllable words in which speakers showed fluidity and variability in the way they marked lexical stress. In these words, it was observed that only the second, fourth, and fifth syllables were stressed. These are show in examples 68-72 respectively.

### *Second syllable stress*

68. Sp 1: // problems aCCOmmodation and //  
69. Sp 3: // the teachers were only giving hyPOthetical situations during  
our  
time //

### *Fourth syllable stress*

70. Sp 1: // and you KEEP on procrastiNating //  
71. Sp 5: // what people don't know is that a teacher has to be  
exceptionALLY brilliant //

### *Fifth syllable stress*

72. Sp 3: // hmm about the the what what er er accommodaTION //

After the acoustic cues (pitch, duration, amplitude) were measured, and similarly to three- and four-syllable words, it was found that higher pitch was the only feature that cued stress. In addition, vowels in both stressed and unstressed positions were produced as full vowels.

The examples shown in all instances suggest that there is some flexibility in stressing in Ghanaian English, and that speakers vary the way they shift the stress in words, showing fluidity. The examples also show that it is not only one person or just a few people who shift stress in words, but rather, almost all the speakers do. Thus, it can be argued that this phenomenon may be general, rather than idiosyncratic. Studies on Ghanaian English (e.g. Adjaye, 2005; Koranteng, 2006) also revealed that this variation exists. In both studies, as well as the present one, one finding is clear: there are ways in which speakers stress words similarly to what might be expected in native contexts (for instance, examples 8, 19, 32, 52) and other ways in which they do this differently (for instance, examples 2-7, 43). These patterns of marking lexical stress may not be unique to Ghanaian English, but similar to many nativized as well as learner varieties of English. This is seen in the works of Peng and Ann (2001), Low (2000), and Deterding (2007, 2011). For example, Peng and Ann (2001) studied the speech of speakers of English from Singapore, Nigeria, and Spain. Their findings revealed that there were distinct differences in the way these speakers marked lexical stress in comparison with British and American Englishes. It is interesting to note that their results also revealed that irrespective of the first language of their participants, stress assignment was similar in all three national varieties. Udofot (2003) presented a reading task and a free speaking task to 60 speakers of Nigerian English and one speaker of British English. Results suggested that the Nigerians stressed more syllables than their British counterpart. Finally, Wiltshire and Moon (2003) compared the phonetic realizations of prominence between 20 speakers of Indian English and 10 speakers of American English. Their results showed that stress placement and their phonetic realizations in Indian English were markedly different from that of the Americans.

The discussion in this section suggests that there is variation in the way speakers of Ghanaian English and other outer circle Englishes assign lexical stress, and this variation also leads to fluidity. That is, the pattern can be changed at any time and this is not likely to have any effect on intelligibility in spoken English. This is because there was no point in time within the conversations where a listener stopped a speaker and asked him or her to either clarify something or repeat an utterance for better understanding. The results also suggest that Ghanaians are not likely to encounter any communication problems when they interact with other speakers of English.

### **The role of lexical stress in communicating in World Englishes**

The findings of the present study, as well as two previous studies on Ghanaian English pronunciation, point to the fact that speakers of Ghanaian English might be said to have a common way of stressing both simple and compound words. For example, Adjaye (2005) and Koranteng (2006) observe that Ghanaians apply what they call “Forward Stress Shift” (p. 40) to the initial syllable of some multi-syllabic words. That is, there is the tendency for the stress to fall on a syllable later than it would normally be in the case of the native speaker. Adjaye for example uses words such as aPPREciate and conSOlIdate in British English and argues that Ghanaians move the stress in each word to the front (or forward), so there is appreciATE and consoliDATE in Ghanaian English. In the present study, speakers are seen to apply forward stress shift, but then it is not in all cases that they do this. In fact, it can be argued that there are instances where there is also a shift to the first syllable of the word even though the native speaker may assign stress differently. In words such as INfrastructure and PERformance, the stress is shifted onto the first syllable instead of the second or third as might be expected. Thus, the examples shown suggest that Ghanaians do not have one way of stressing words, but that there are different ways of doing it.

The patterns of stressing in the Ghanaian variety of English have implications for communicating in world Englishes and English as an international language. This is because as English speakers, including Ghanaians, interact with one another, they are expected to at least find one another’s speech intelligible. Being intelligible also involves utilizing all pronunciation features; both segmental and prosodic, and the importance of lexical stress cannot be overemphasized in this regard. For example, because of the amount of time Ghanaians take to produce weak forms as full forms, it may create an impression of emphasis, and this has the potential of communicating unintended meaning (Koranteng, 2006), especially if their listeners are inner circle speakers. This suggestion may be valid if Ghanaians communicate with inner circle speakers. This is because inner circle speakers pay particular attention to stressed syllables in utterances (Celce-Murcia, Brinton, & Goodwin, 1996; Harmer, 2001) and so they tend to store vocabulary items according to word stress patterns (Rogerson-Revell, 2011). It

is necessary to point out that Ghanaians rarely come across inner circle speakers in their daily communication, as the majority of such interactions only take place between Ghanaians and in few cases with their West African neighbours. Research (e. g. Hahn, 2004; Roach, 2000) has shown that speakers of English outside of the inner circle contexts find it difficult to learn to place lexical stress correctly. In the present study, the speakers cannot be said to *incorrectly* assign stress; they can only be said to have some similar ways with and some different ways from inner circle speakers in assigning lexical stress. It is for this reason that Jenkins (2000) recommends that lexical stress should be excluded from the core features of the lingua franca core (LFC) in the meantime, stressing that it may be either unimportant for intelligibility, difficult to teach or both.

In this regard, Field (2005) examined the role of lexical stress on intelligibility among both native and non-native speakers of English. From his results, he contends that while incorrect lexical stress in isolated words seems to affect intelligibility, it might be significantly higher when lexical stress shifted to another syllable without a change in vowel quality or when it was shifted rightwards compared to the left. He, therefore, warns that lexical stress misplacement can severely hinder the intelligibility of the speaker, be it native or non-native. In contrast to Field's study is Deterding (2011) who investigated the features that can cause communication breakdowns among speakers of English in East Asia. His findings revealed that there was variation in the way his participants marked lexical stress. Based on that, he concluded that "clearly, we have no evidence from these data of variation in lexical stress causing misunderstandings" (p. 94). Deterding's study also revealed that even when lexical stress was misplaced, there was no problem with intelligibility among the speakers. In another study, Luchini & Kennedy (2013) examined the speech of Hindi and Spanish speakers of English and found that "the only time lexical misplacement caused intelligibility among the speakers was when the word also carried nuclear stress" (p. 85).

From these three studies discussed, one may speculate three patterns: One, a shift in lexical stress accompanied with a change in vowel quality may affect intelligibility, Two, a shift in lexical stress alone is not likely to cause intelligibility problems, and Three, a shift in lexical stress accompanied with a shift in nuclear stress may cause intelligibility problems. While Field's findings involved both native and non-native speakers, Deterding's and Luchini & Kennedy's studies involved only non-native speakers (from outer and expanding circles). One common finding among all three studies is that there was a shift in lexical stress placement, the only difference is that there was an additional feature identified in the studies of Field and that of Luchini & Kennedy. With respect to lexical and nuclear stress shift, Jenkins (2000) argues that there appears a relationship between intelligibility and nuclear stress shift in her data. She notes that "intelligibility was rarely impaired by misplacement of lexical stress" and where such occurred, it was "because of the subsequent misplacement of nuclear stress" (p. 41). To this end, Jenkins

(2000) recognizes the importance of nuclear stress placement in ELF interactions, and that is why she proposes its inclusion in her LFC, stressing that its incorrect placement may cause serious misinterpretation and ultimately, misunderstanding between ELF interlocutors.

The fact that there was no time within the conversations where speakers were stopped means that even though speakers may shift lexical stress, this is not likely to cause problems in their everyday English interactions. This can be extended to interactions between Ghanaians and other speakers of English, especially those outside the inner circle. In the context of English as an international language (EIL), it has been established that speakers outside the inner circle far outnumber those in the inner circle (Graddol, 1997). Thus, it is possible to suggest that the majority of interactions may not involve any inner circle speakers. And, even if they are involved, it is those who tend to shift stress who form the majority. And, whether there is a shift or not, it is not likely to contribute to any negative effect on communication. The commonalities that exist in stress placement in Ghanaian English and other outer or expanding circle Englishes show that this is a systematic phenomenon. It therefore goes to say that if you share a common feature with other people, using that feature, in this case, lexical stress placement, is likely to enhance intelligibility, rather than hinder it.

## **Conclusion**

The present study aimed at showing that there is variability and fluidity in the way Ghanaians assign lexical stress. Conversations recorded from 200 university students were analyzed using auditory and acoustic means, making it the most comprehensive study so far on the placement of lexical stress in any outer or expanding circle English variety. The results, as already indicated, showed that while speakers stress some words similarly to what might be expected by inner circle speakers, they also stress some differently. Although there are ways in which Ghanaians sometimes differ from inner circle speakers in the way they mark lexical stress, this does not appear to negatively affect the intelligibility of their speech. One of the main tenets of communicating in English as either an international language or as a lingua franca (ELF) is that both speakers and listeners would find one another's speech intelligible (e.g. Jenkins, 2000). Research on intelligibility in English has usually been done with native speakers being the judges of non-native speakers' speech. However, in EIL, or ELF, all users have equal stake and responsibility in making sure they sound intelligible. This also entails making a conscious effort, especially if you are the listener, to get your interlocutor's utterance. The speaker, whether native or non-native, should not bear the sole responsibility in making sure that his/her words are clear; the listener also needs to listen *well* because intelligibility is not a one-way, but rather, a two-way affair. It is important for listeners to rely on many cues, not just on the words or on certain particular features in an interaction. Where possible, one

can rely on the context of interaction to be able to fully decipher the words and ultimately, comprehend the speech of the speaker.

In conclusion, English speakers come from different countries and different continents, who may sometimes sound similar and other times sound different from one another. Listeners are therefore bound to perceive some similarities and differences in some pronunciation features. In order to enjoy communicating with one another, all speakers will have to adapt to one another's pronunciation patterns, including the way they mark stress. And, for listeners who might come into contact with Ghanaians and for that matter other outer and expanding circle speakers, they have to become accustomed to their stress placement. To do this, it is important for listeners, no matter which circle of English they belong to, to understand the systematic stress patterning of their speakers, for, this is the only way they can achieve intelligibility, which will in turn ensure comprehensibility in communicating in world Englishes.

Note:

<sup>1</sup>Stress is indicated with CAPS.

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## **Teaching English as an International Language: Variables Affecting Vietnamese EFL Lecturers' Beliefs**

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### **Abstract**

Teachers' classroom practices are influenced by their beliefs and are unlikely to change if these influencing factors are not changed (Webster, McNeish, Scott, Maynard & Haywood, 2012). Current roles and functions of English as an international language (EIL) require changes in teachers' perspectives in teaching English for intercultural communication. This paper reports findings from a quantitative study which provides insights into the factors that likely inform the changes of teachers' beliefs. In the study, a close-ended questionnaire was distributed to 57 Vietnamese lecturers. Their answers were converted into an Excel spreadsheet and analyzed using a deductive approach. A Mann-Whitney U test, a nonparametric alternative for the independent samples t-test, was conducted to determine if there was a statistically significant difference in teachers' rating scores towards the teaching of EIL among teachers of English who had pursued their postgraduate and doctoral studies overseas and in Vietnam. The results revealed that teachers' international learning experience had a significant influence on teachers' perspectives whereas teaching experience, teachers' qualifications, and gender had no significant impact. The study suggests teachers are to be exposed to intercultural environments in order for them to develop beliefs and attitudes which will result in their adaptation of teaching EIL.

**Keywords:** English as an international language (EIL), intercultural communication, teachers' beliefs, teacher-related variables.

### **Introduction**

It is widely accepted that today the number of bilingual speakers of English surpasses that of the first language speakers. The latest research from British Council predicts that by 2020 the number of people actively learning English will exceed 1.9 billion (British Council, 2013). This impressive number reveals a changing socio-linguistic reality of English, that is, English becomes the most dominant international language of the 21st century – a language of global communication, international trade, entertainment, education, and technology. This adds more functions and roles to the English language (Hamid & Nguyen, 2016; Kirkpatrick, 2008; Matsuda, 2012). Cultural diversity and intercultural encounters, therefore, become the reality of the modern world, requiring intercultural competence to become a requisite response. In this regard, British Council emphasizes that the trend toward

21st-century education has shed light on the crucial need of being competent in communicating with multilingual and multicultural speakers. Similarly, Ge (2004) states that the main goal of English language teaching (ELT) in the 21st century is to develop learners' intercultural communicative competence (ICC), that is, the ability to interact appropriately and effectively with other interlocutors from different cultural backgrounds (Sinicrope, Norris, & Watanabe, 2007). Therefore, not only does the English teaching practice focus on developing linguistic skills, but also enables learners to go beyond their own cultural boundaries. Given that reason, the pedagogy that prioritizes the single norms or the models of the native speaker becomes no longer adequate (British Council, 2013; Hamid & Baldauf, 2013; Kirkpatrick, 2007; Marlina, 2014; Sharifian, 2014). In many ELT contexts, the EIL paradigm which promotes varieties of Englishes and diversity of cultures in English communication has been employed by many language educators as an effective alternative to the above pedagogy and notably to enhance learners' intercultural communicative competence (Matsuda, 2012; Matsuda & Friedrich, 2011; McKay, 2012; Phan, 2008). In Vietnam, however, the EIL paradigm is not widely adopted by many Vietnamese practitioners in their language classrooms. The native-speaker model is still dominant in ELT classrooms in which cultures of English-speaking countries are introduced and emphasized more than learners' own cultures and other cultures (Phan, 2008). Moreover, most of the time learners are exposed to American English and British English varieties rather than World Englishes such as Indian English, Singlish or Manglish (Nguyen, 2017; Tran & Ngo, 2017). This explained for the fact that many English users in Vietnam are facing problems using the language with non-native-English speakers in daily communications. Hence, several researchers (e.g., Hamid & Nguyen, 2016; Mai, 2016; Nguyen, 2017; Tran & Moore, 2015; Tran & Ngo, 2017) have proposed a crucial need for ELT practitioners to change their teaching perspectives in order to meet Vietnamese learners' communicative needs.

As Webster et al. (2012) state, it is teachers' beliefs that cause their classroom practices which are unlikely to change if these influencing factors are not changed. Therefore, making changes in teachers' beliefs is considered to be one of the most important steps for the educational development and innovation. Nevertheless, research on the factors causing changes in teachers' beliefs, particularly concerning teaching EIL, is still scarce. This study, hence, contributes to filling the literature gap by exploring variables affecting teachers' beliefs concerning the EIL teaching implementation in higher education classrooms in Vietnam.

In what follows, the paper will review the features of an international language, distinguish the concept of EIL with World Englishes and English as a lingua franca, followed by an overview of EIL pedagogy. After that, the role of teachers' educational beliefs and teacher-related variables will be also presented. Next, the methodology of the study will be explained in more detail, followed by the findings, and then discussion and implications. The

paper will end with a conclusion capturing the main points of the study.

## **Literature Review**

### ***Features of an International Language***

A significant definition of an international language was made by Smith (1976), stating that an international language is one which “is used by people of different nations to communicate with one another” (p. 17). Smith also makes important assertions on the relationship between an international language and culture, including (1) learners of an international language do not need to accept cultural beliefs, values of the native speakers, (2) the ownership of that language is de-nationalized, (3) and the educational role of learning is to enable learners to communicate their own cultures and personal ideas to others. This assumption is valid for the use of EIL in a global sense where English is used by individuals to communicate with people from other cultural backgrounds. However, McKay (2002) argues that it should be modified to fit the use of EIL in a local sense. Elaborating from Smith’s assumptions, McKay notices some essential revisions, distinguishing the use of EIL in a global and local sense. Firstly, when being used as an international language, English is used both in a global sense for intercultural communications between nations and in a local sense as a language of wider interactions within multilingual communities. Secondly, no longer does the use of English as an international language connect to the culture of Inner Circle countries. Thirdly, in a local sense, English as an international language is embedded in the culture of the country where it is used. Finally, as an international language in a global sense, one of its primary functions is to enable users to share their own cultures and ideas with others. These interpretations are more contextually sensitive, and, hence, are substantially beneficial to language practitioners across contexts to develop their own teaching approaches fitting their learners’ communicative needs in both global and local situations.

### ***English as an International Language, World Englishes (WE) and English as a Lingua Franca (ELF)***

Due to the changing sociolinguistic reality of English, several scholars have developed different frameworks to conceptualize, research, learn and teach English, such as English as an international language, World Englishes, and English as a lingua franca. However, there are still terminological debates on using these terms as alternatives. Distinguishing these terms, therefore, has a substantial significance to form the pedagogy of EIL, which will be presented as follows.

Firstly, the use of World Englishes is based on Kachru’s (1986) description of institutionalized varieties of English, in which three main types

of English speakers are distinguished. The first so-called members of Inner Circle are the native speakers of English for whom English is the mother tongue. The second so-called members of Outer Circle are the non-native speakers of English who use an institutionalized second-language variety of English. The third is the non-native speakers of English who view English as a foreign language, called members of Expanding Circle. Kachru maintains that the Outer Circle members have an institutionalized variety of English, which was created through a long time “of acculturation in new cultural and geographical contexts; they have a large range of functions in the local educational, administrative, and legal system” (p. 19). Such uses result in the development of nativized discourse and style types of varieties. Thus, Kachru describes institutionalized second-language varieties of English as World Englishes. While Kachru’s model was contributory to recognizing the validity of varieties of English, it is believed that the diffusion of English has changed its socio-linguistic reality; and hence, has brought with it far more complexity in use than can be captured by this model.

In terms of English as a lingua franca, House (1999) asserts that ELF interactions take place “between members of two or more different lingua-cultures in English, for none of whom English is the mother tongue” (p. 74). This interpretation confirms Firth’s (1996) definition that English is “a contact language between persons who share neither a common native tongue nor a common national culture, and for whom English is the chosen foreign language of communication” (p. 240). In this sense, ELF is used with a narrow meaning, which includes only interactions between L2 speakers of English who do not share the same culture, and hence excluding, for instance, Indian speakers of English who have different mother tongues and choose English to communicate with each other (McKay & Bokhorst-Heng, 2008). It also excludes interactions between L1 and L2 English speakers as well as those between the English speakers within the Inner Circle countries. WE scholars criticize ELF approaches that ignore the pluricentric nature of English.

Regarding English as an international language, some researchers equate it to WE or ELF. However, due to the diversity of the social contexts of English, these usages to describe English in its global status appear insufficient. In this study, the term EIL is interpreted according to McKay’s (2002) definition which considers EIL as an “umbrella” term. EIL, in this sense, characterizes the use of English between any two L2 speakers of English who share the same culture or own a different culture. It also includes speakers of WE communicating within their country, as well as ELF interactions. It then includes L2 speakers of English using English with L1 speakers. By this understanding, EIL is viewed “far more complex linguistically than is allowed for in either the World Englishes or ELF model” (p. 16); nevertheless, EIL cannot separate from WE and ELF but embed them (Marlina, 2014).

### ***The pedagogy of English as an International Language***

The pedagogy of EIL is informed by the concept of EIL perspective or paradigm (Sharifian, 2009), which states that EIL “rejects the notion of a single variety of English which serves as the medium for international communication. English, with its pluralized forms, is a language of international and intercultural communication” (p. 2). In other words, the EIL paradigm promotes the diversity and complexity of the form, user, and culture of the language. Elaborating from these assumptions, Marlina (2014) points out three main aspects of EIL pedagogy, including (1) assisting learners across contexts to gain knowledge and be aware of the pluricentricity of English, (2) encouraging learners to have an equal recognition and behavior towards all varieties of English, (3) and developing their ability to negotiate and communicate effectively in intercultural encounters.

Several researchers (e.g., Marlina, 2014; Matsuda, 2003, 2005, 2012; McKay, 2002; Sharifian, 2009) assert that the shift to EIL pedagogy is an irreversible necessity in light of the development of the language and society today. It poses a need for English language teachers and teacher-educators to re-examine and adjust their teaching methodology, instructional variety and model, teaching materials, curricula, and testing and assessment (Brown, 2012; Canagarajah, 2006; Kirkpatrick, 2006; Matsuda & Friedrich, 2011) to fit their learners’ needs, which might first stem from teachers’ educational beliefs.

### ***The role of teachers’ educational beliefs***

Regarding beliefs, Borg (2001) puts that “a belief is a proposition which may be consciously or unconsciously held, is evaluative in that it is accepted as true by the individual, and is therefore imbued with emotive commitment; further, it serves as a guide to thought and behavior” (p. 186). A consensus among interpretations of beliefs is that beliefs dispose or guide people’s thinking and action, which helps individuals make sense of the world. For that reason, beliefs become very important in the teaching and learning process.

In terms of teachers’ educational beliefs, Xu (2012) asserts that it is central to shaping their planning and curricular decisions, and in effect, determining what should be taught and what teaching approaches should be employed. It confirms Turner, Christensen, and Meyer’s (2009) claim that teachers’ beliefs orient their decision-making, behavior, and interactions with students. Similarly, Williams and Burden (1997) assert that “teachers’ deep-rooted beliefs about how languages are learned will pervade their classroom actions more than a particular methodology they were told to adopt or course book they followed” (p. 57).

In Vietnam, there is no common English teaching perspective for all teaching levels and among teachers. Rather, the ELT practice seems to vary among teaching practitioners, which might greatly be influenced by each

individual's beliefs (Tran & Moore, 2015). Hence, in order to make innovations in the language teaching, there is an urgent need for making changes in teachers' beliefs to suit the changing sociolinguistic reality of the English language. To fulfill that goal, there is a vital need to study variables affecting teachers' beliefs regarding teaching EIL.

#### Teacher-related Variables

Research has found some potential variables such as international experience, teaching experience, and gender that might affect teachers' performance, attitudes, and educational views, which are presented below.

Firstly, regarding international experience, scholars from the field of cross-cultural psychology and intercultural training have noted the impact of study-abroad experience on teachers' educational views (Cushner & Mahon, 2002). In particular, overseas experience provides an individual with opportunities to live and work in a multicultural environment, bringing valuable experiences with regard to global affairs (Cushner, McClelland, & Safford, 2000). As Grant and Secada (1990) claim, overseas experience helps develop teachers' cultural knowledge, broaden their global perspective, and raise their belief in the value of multicultural education through interactions with interlocutors from varying cultural backgrounds. In line with this, Cushner and Brislin (1996) maintain that experience with multicultures will increase teachers' world-mindedness and reduce ethnocentrism.

In terms of teaching experience, during the 1970s and 1980s years of experience was believed to have a relationship with teachers' effectiveness (Klitgaard & Hall, 1974; Murnane & Phillips, 1981), albeit not necessarily significant. Nye, Konstantopoulos, & Hedges (2004) confirm that belief by asserting that teachers with less than three years of experience are typically less effective than more experienced teachers. Similarly, Harris and Sass (2007) maintain that on average senior teachers are more effective than less experienced teachers. However, Darling-Hammond (2000) argues that after five to eight teaching years, the benefits of experience appear to be reduced. More recent findings like Chingosa and Peterson's (2011) suggest that experience perhaps assists with effectiveness although some senior teachers seem less effective later in their work.

Also, the literature shows some noticeable findings of different attitudes between female and male teachers towards the teaching profession. The recent study by Erdamar, Aytaç, Türk, and Arseven (2016) combines the findings of 35 relevant studies composing a sample of 4,289 male and 6,073 female preservice teachers in Turkey and reveals that female teachers display more positive attitudes towards their occupation compared to male teachers. It confirms Çapri and Çelikkaleli's (2008) and Kaya and Büyükkasap's (2005) findings that female teachers tend to be more enthusiastic about the teaching profession than male colleagues. Females, in particular, view teaching as an ideal profession and have more ambition to be a teacher. In this sense, Akkaya's (2009) study indicates that female teachers in Turkish Education Department are more successful than male counterparts with regard to their

attitudes and academic success. Hence, it is claimed that gender significantly has an effect on teachers' attitudes towards the teaching profession.

While the above-mentioned variables have been found to influence teachers to some aspects, there is no research found regarding the effect of teachers' qualifications. Moreover, no research has been conducted on whether such variables affect teachers' beliefs regarding teaching EIL. It is hypothesized that overseas-learning experience, teaching experience, teachers' qualifications, and gender affect teachers' beliefs concerning teaching EIL perspective. To fill the gap in the literature, this study adopted a quantitative approach to test the given hypothesis by addressing the following research question: How do overseas learning experience, teaching experience, teachers' qualifications, and gender affect teachers' beliefs regarding teaching EIL?

## Methodology

### *Participants*

Ninety-eight tertiary teachers were invited to participate in the survey through email and Facebook. Within one week, 52 teachers responded, giving a response rate of 42.86 %. This number increased to 61.22% after five more reminder emails over two weeks. As the number of novice teachers was merely three people, and only two teachers gained BA degree, their responses were removed from the dataset, leaving 57 responses. The biographical information for the participants is illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1  
*The biographical information for the participants*

Category	Gender		Teaching experience		Learning experience		Teachers' qualifications	
	Male	Female	Junior	Senior	Overseas	Non-overseas	MA	PhD
Number	10	47	33	24	32	25	10	47
Proportion (%)	17.55	82.45	57.89	42.10	56.14	43.86	17.55	82.45

Note: Junior: 4 – 9 years, Senior: >=10 years

### *Instrument*

The questionnaire included two sections. In the first section, there were questions asking the participants about their age, gender, teaching experience, overseas learning experience and their qualifications to collect bio-data. It was followed by eight statements pertaining to EIL teaching principles. The

participants would tick on the appropriate option (strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree or strongly disagree) to show their attitudes towards each statement (See Appendix 1).

### ***Data collection and analysis procedures***

Firstly, the survey was sent to 20 teachers who were asked to try to answer questions and give any comments relating to the questions' contents, lexical items, and structures. Then the questionnaire was revised according to the respondents' feedback, such as reducing some redundant items, correcting some grammar mistakes, and facilitating the meanings of some complex sentences. Finally, the last version was delivered to the participants online.

Reliability analysis was conducted with the questionnaire data using SPSS 22. The Cronbach's alpha value of .727 indicated an acceptable level of reliability (Field, 2009).

For the data analysis, the participants' responses were converted into numbers to calculate scores, such as strongly agree = 5, agree = 4, neutral = 3, disagree = 2, and strongly disagree = 1.

It was hypothesized that overseas training experience, teaching experience, teachers' qualifications, and gender impact teachers' beliefs concerning the implementation of EIL teaching in language classrooms. Nevertheless, in analyzing the data, null hypotheses of no difference and no effect were tested. It was expected, however, that these null hypotheses would be rejected. All the null hypotheses were tested at alpha .05 level of significance and with a 95% confidence interval. The procedure of data analysis consisted of the following phrases.

Firstly, the observed values of the Shapiro-Wilk statistics, the test of normality, for the rating scores of all teacher groups did not meet the assumption of normality ( $p < .05$ ). A visual inspection of the histograms and normal Q-Q plots also showed that the scores were not normally distributed. Therefore, a non-parametric test, Mann-Whitney U test, was employed to examine the research question.

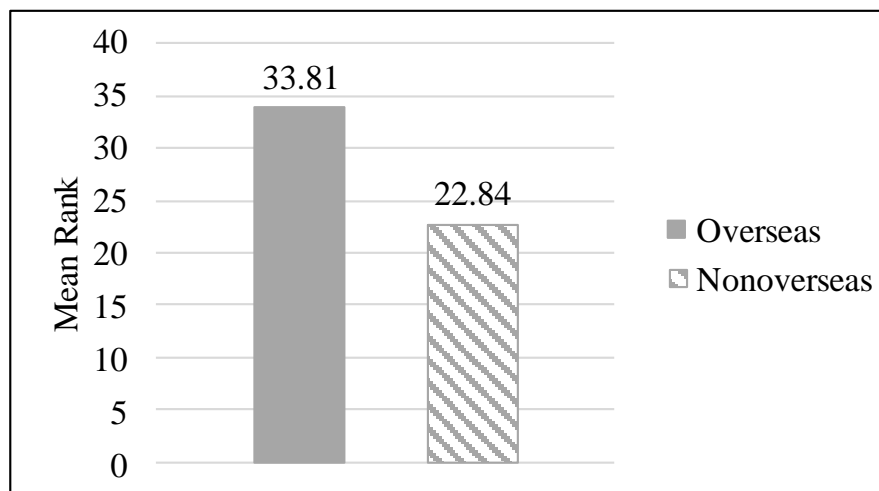
Secondly, a Mann-Whitney U test, a nonparametric alternative for the independent samples t-test, was conducted to determine if there was a statistically significant difference in teachers' rating scores towards EIL teaching principles, between overseas and non-overseas trained teachers, junior and senior teachers, MA and PhD teachers, and male and female teachers.

Lastly, the value of effect size (Cohen's d) was calculated to determine the magnitude of the difference.

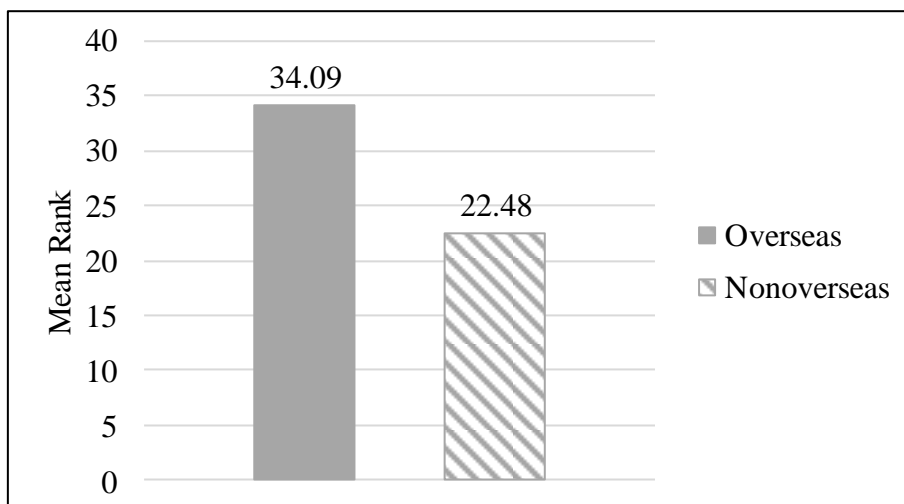
## Results

### *Overseas learning experience*

Rating scores of overseas-trained teachers (mean rank = 33.81) for the principle that the EIL teaching target is not the native-like were significantly higher than of non-overseas-trained teachers (mean rank = 22.84),  $U = 246.00$ ,  $z = -2.618$ ,  $p = .009$ , and the strength of association between the two groups, that is, the effect size is moderate ( $r = -.35$ ). It is illustrated in Figure 1.



*Figure 1.* Mean ranks between overseas- and nonoverseas-trained teachers' scores for that the EIL teaching target is not the native-like



*Figure 2.* Mean ranks between overseas- and nonoverseas-trained teachers' scores for that learners should be encouraged to respect other varieties and its users as bilinguals or multilinguals

Rating scores of overseas-trained teachers (mean rank = 34.09) for the principle that learners should be encouraged to respect other varieties and its users as bilinguals or multilinguals were significantly higher than of nonoverseas-trained teachers (mean rank = 22.48),  $U = 237.00$ ,  $z = -2.803$ ,  $p = .005$ , and the effect size is moderate ( $r = -.37$ ). It is illustrated in Figure 2.

Rating scores of overseas-trained teachers (mean rank = 32.58) for the principle that learners should be exposed to different varieties of English other than American and British English were significantly higher than of non-overseas-trained teachers (mean rank = 24.42),  $U = 285.50$ ,  $z = -1.967$ ,  $p = .049$ , and the effect size is moderate ( $r = -.26$ ). It is illustrated in Figure 3.

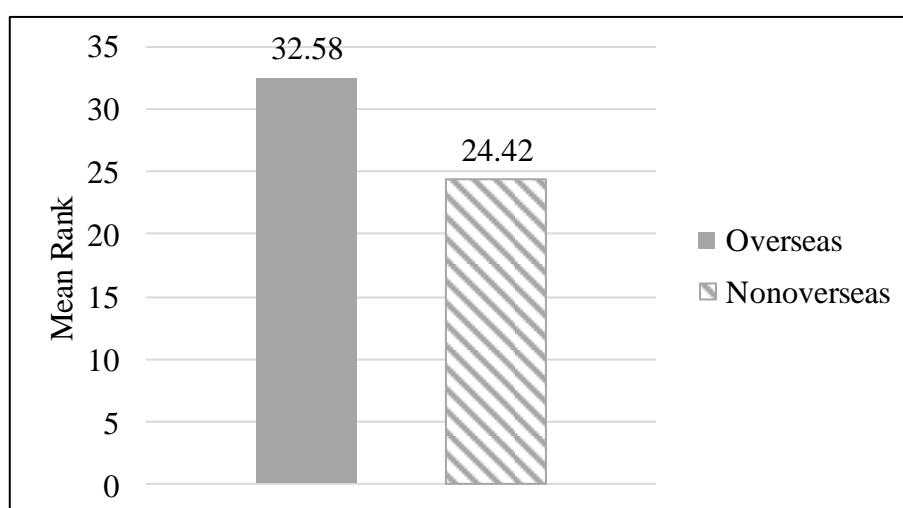


Figure 3. Mean ranks between overseas- and nonoverseas-trained teachers' scores for that learners should be exposed to different varieties of English.

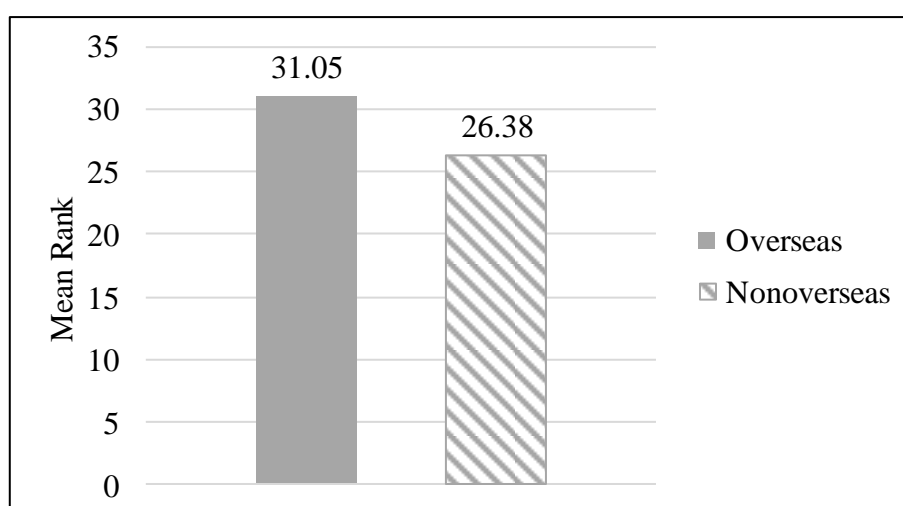
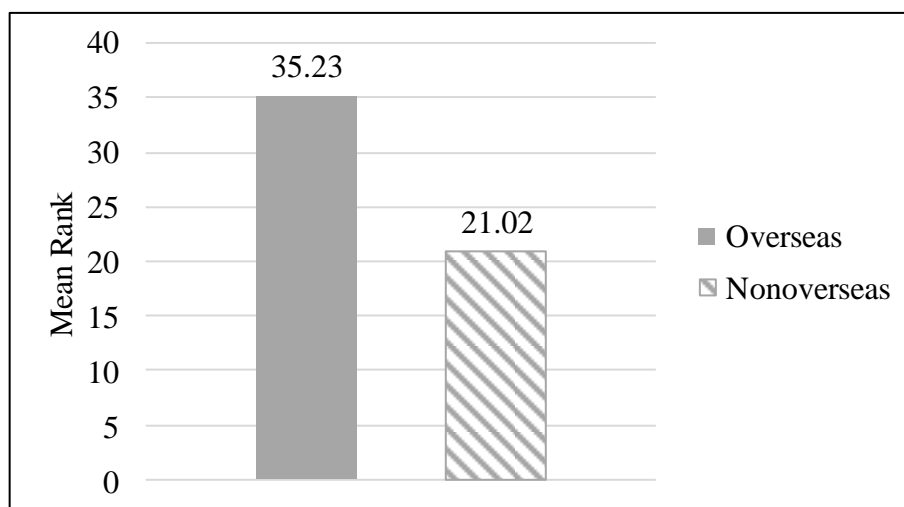


Figure 4. Mean ranks between overseas- and nonoverseas-trained teachers' scores for that learners should develop negotiation skills of English varieties

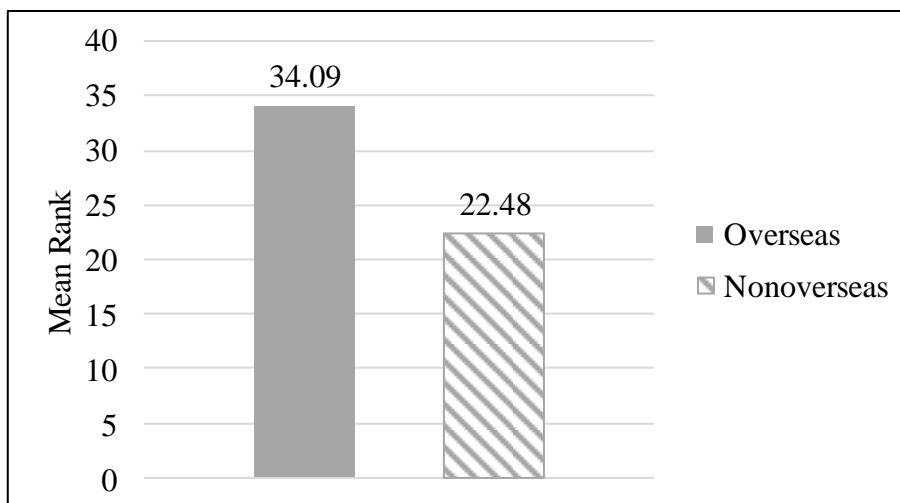
Rating scores of overseas-trained teachers (mean rank = 31.05) and non-overseas-trained teachers (mean rank = 26.38) for the principle that learners should develop negotiation skills of varieties of English in multilingual communications were not significantly different, for  $U = 334.50$ ,  $z = -1.226$ ,  $p = .220$ . It is illustrated in Figure 4.

Rating scores of overseas-trained teachers (mean rank = 35.23) for the principle that learners should be encouraged to appreciate diverse cultures in intercultural communications were significantly higher than of non-overseas-trained teachers (mean rank = 21.02),  $U = 200.50$ ,  $z = -3.613$ ,  $p = .000$ , and the effect size is approaching large ( $r = -.48$ ). It is illustrated in Figure 5.

Rating scores of overseas-trained teachers (mean rank = 34.09) towards the principle that learners should learn how to explain and express the cultural values they hold in the target language were significantly higher than of nonoverseas-trained teachers (mean rank = 22.48),  $U = 237.00$ ,  $z = -2.816$ ,  $p = .005$ , and the effect size is moderate ( $r = -.37$ ). It is illustrated in Figure 6.

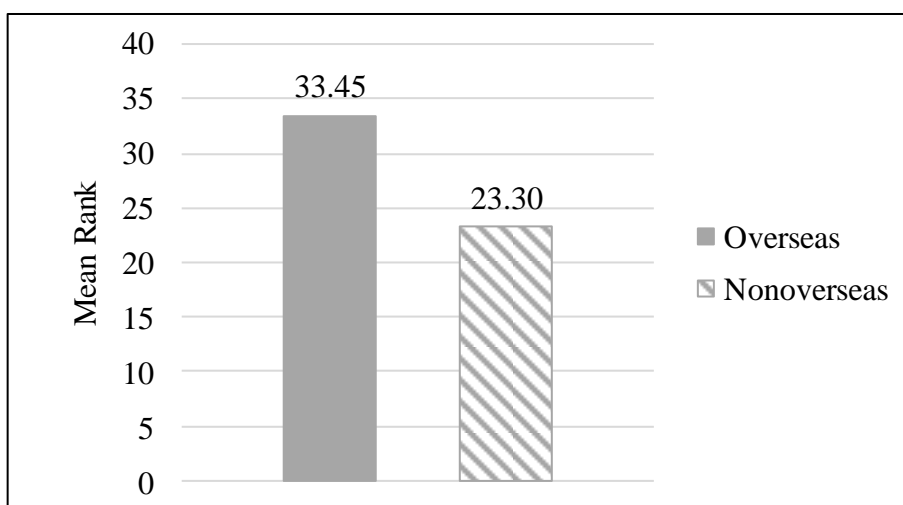


*Figure 5.* Mean ranks between overseas- and nonoverseas-trained teachers' scores for that learners should be encouraged to appreciate diverse cultures in intercultural communications



*Figure 6.* Mean ranks between overseas- and nonoverseas-trained teachers' scores for that learners should learn how to explain and express the cultural values they hold in the target language

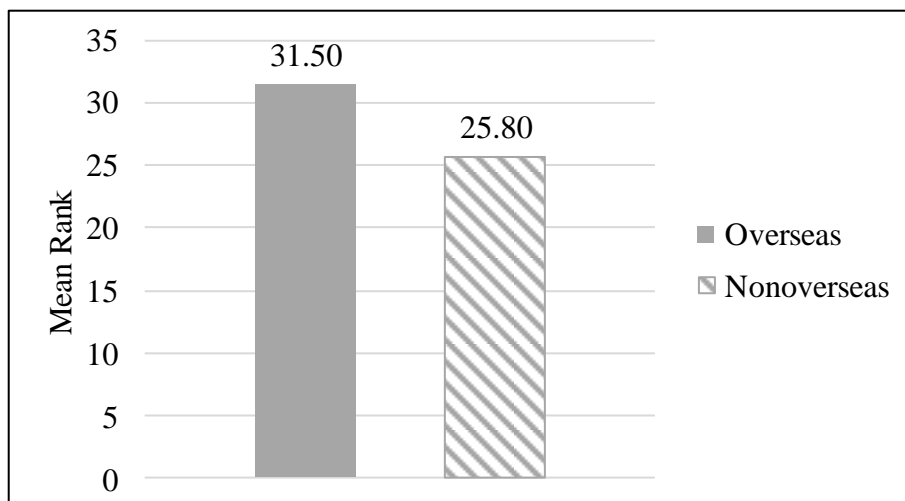
Rating scores of overseas-trained teachers (mean rank = 33.45) for the principle that learners should be exposed to diverse cultures were significantly higher than of nonoverseas-trained teachers (mean rank = 23.30),  $U = 257.50$ ,  $z = -2.508$ ,  $p = .012$ , and the effect size is moderate ( $r = -.33$ ). It is given in Figure 7.



*Figure 7.* Mean ranks between overseas- and nonoverseas-trained teachers' scores for that learners should be exposed to diverse cultures

Rating scores of overseas-trained teachers (mean rank = 31.50) and nonoverseas-trained teachers (mean rank = 25.80) for the principle that learners should develop negotiation skills of diverse cultures in intercultural

communications were not significantly different,  $U = 320.00$ ,  $z = -1.485$ ,  $p = .138$ . It is given in Figure 8.



*Figure 8.* Mean ranks between overseas- and nonoverseas-trained teachers' scores for that learners should develop negotiation skills of diverse cultures in intercultural communications

In general, the rating scores of overseas-trained teachers' attitudes towards most of EIL teaching principles, excepting principles 4 and 8, were significantly higher than those of nonoverseas-trained teachers', with the magnitude of the differences were from moderate to large. Therefore, it can be concluded based on this sample that overseas learning experience has a significant influence on teachers' beliefs regarding teaching EIL.

### ***Teaching experience***

Descriptive statistics in Table 2 showed that rating scores of junior teachers and senior teachers for all EIL teaching principles were not significantly different,  $p > .05$ . There was no evidence to reject the hypothesis that there was no difference between junior and senior teachers' scores. Therefore, it can be concluded based on this sample that there was no influence of teaching experience on teachers' beliefs concerning teaching EIL.

Table 2

*Differences of Median and Mean Ranks between junior and senior teachers' rating scores for each principle of teaching EIL*

Items	Teaching experience	N	Mdn	Mean Rank	U	z	Sig. (2-tailed)
1. The target of teaching EIL is not the native-like.	Junior	33	4.00	28.36	375.00	-	.725
	Senior	24	4.00	29.88		.359	
	Total	57					
2. Learners should be encouraged to respect other varieties and its users as bilinguals and multilinguals.	Junior	33	4.00	28.95	394.50	-	.995
	Senior	24	4.00	29.06		.026	
	Total	57					
3. Learners should be exposed to many varieties of English other than American English and British English.	Junior	33	4.00	28.61	383.00	-	.840
	Senior	24	4.00	29.54		.224	
	Total	57					
4. Learners should develop skills to negotiate varieties of English in multilingual communications.	Junior	33	5.00	29.80	369.50	-	.659
	Senior	24	5.00	27.90		.499	
	Total	57					
5. Learners should be encouraged to appreciate diverse cultures in intercultural communications.	Junior	33	4.00	27.58	349.00	-	.429
	Senior	24	4.00	30.96		.855	
	Total	57					
6. Learners should learn how to explain and express the cultural values they hold in the target language.	Junior	33	4.00	28.33	374.00	-	.718
	Senior	24	4.00	29.92		.382	
	Total	57					
7. Learners should be exposed to diverse cultures.	Junior	33	4.00	29.50	379.50	-	.795
	Senior	24	4.00	28.31		.292	
	Total	57					
8. Learners should develop skills to negotiate diversities of culture in intercultural communications.	Junior	33	5.00	29.05	394.50	-	.966
	Senior	24	5.00	28.94		.028	
	Total	57					

Note: U = the Mann-Whitney test statistic, Mdn = Median, z = a standardized score, \*p<.05

Table 3  
Differences of median and mean ranks between MA and PhD teachers' rating scores for each principle of teaching EIL

Items	Degree	N	Median	Mean Rank	U	z	Sig. (2-tailed)
1. The target of teaching EIL is not the native-like.	MA	47	4.00	27.81	179.00	-1.242	.220
	PhD	10	5.00	34.60			
	Total	57					
2. learners should be taught to use English successfully with their natural sounds like bilinguals or multilinguals.	MA	47	4.00	28.13	194.00	-.920	.360
	PhD	10	5.00	33.10			
	Total	57					
3. Learners should be exposed to many varieties of English other than American English and British English.	MA	47	4.00	28.86	228.50	-.146	.884
	PhD	10	4.00	29.65			
	Total	57					
4. Learners should develop skills to negotiate varieties of English in multilingual communications.	MA	47	5.00	30.06	185.00	-1.221	.222
	PhD	10	4.00	24.00			
	Total	57					
5. Learners should be encouraged to appreciate diverse cultures in English communications.	MA	47	4.00	25.95	91.50	-3.390	.001*
	PhD	10	5.00	43.35			
	Total	57					
6. Learners should learn how to explain and express the cultural values they hold.	MA	47	4.00	27.36	158.00	-1.735	.083
	PhD	10	5.00	36.70			
	Total	57					
7. Learners should be exposed to diverse cultures.	MA	47	4.00	29.55	209.00	-.597	.550
	PhD	10	4.00	26.40			
	Total	57					
8. Learners should develop skills to negotiate diversities of culture in intercultural communications.	MA	47	5.00	30.20	178.50	-1.368	.198
	PhD	10	4.00	23.35			
	Total	57					

Note: U = the Mann-Whitney test statistic, Mdn = Median, z = a standardized score, \*p<.05

### ***Teachers' qualifications***

Descriptive statistics in Table 3 showed that rating scores of MA and PhD teachers for seven out of eight EIL teaching principles were not significantly different,  $p > .05$ . There was no evidence to reject the hypothesis that there was no difference between MA and PhD teachers' rating scores. Therefore, it can be concluded based on this sample that there was no influence of teachers' degrees on their' beliefs regarding teaching EIL.

### ***Gender***

Descriptive statistics in Table 4 showed that rating scores of male and female teachers for all EIL teaching principles were not significantly different,  $p > .05$ . There was no evidence to reject the hypothesis that there was no difference between male and female teachers' rating scores. Therefore, it can be concluded based on this sample that there was no influence of teachers' gender on their' beliefs regarding teaching EIL.

### **Discussion and Implications**

The findings indicate that overseas-trained teachers are more likely open-minded to the implementation of EIL teaching principles in English language classrooms than non-overseas-trained teachers. It suggests that study-abroad experience significantly affects teachers' beliefs in a positive way towards teaching EIL. It is consistent with Cushner and Mahon's (2002) and Grant and Secada's (1990) findings that international experience offers significant cross-cultural immersion, leading to one's intercultural awareness and professional development in terms of global-mindedness. Also, Cushner and Brislin (1996) maintain that experience with multicultures will increase teachers' world-mindedness and reduce ethnocentrism, and, hence, making significant changes in teachers' educational views. This relationship between international experience and teachers' positive attitudes towards teaching EIL proposes that this paradigm is associated with the knowledge and skills that are necessary for learners in intercultural encounters.

Teachers are, therefore, supposed to take more opportunities to study or travel overseas to experience the international and intercultural environment. It is because the new demands of the globalized world require teachers to increase their knowledge and experience to serve the learners who are expected to become global citizens in the future. This emphasizes significant immersion experiences in multicultures other than one's own (Cushner & Mahon, 2002). In addition, policymakers or employers are supposed to provide teachers more opportunities to join international events or exchange programs with international institutions. The findings also revealed that there was no impact of teaching experience, teachers' qualifications, and gender on teachers' beliefs concerning the EIL teaching.

Table 4  
*Differences of Median and Mean Ranks between male and female teachers' rating scores for each principle of teaching EIL*

Items	Gender	N	Mdn	Mean Rank	U	z	Sig. (2-tailed)
1. The target of teaching EIL is not the native-like.	Male	10	4.00	27.10	216.00	-.421	.673
	Female	47	4.00	29.40			
	Total	57					
2. Learners should be encouraged to respect other varieties and its users as bilinguals and multilinguals.	Male	10	4.00	27.85	223.50	-.258	.796
	Female	47	4.00	29.24			
	Total	57					
3. Learners should be exposed to many varieties of English other than American English and British English.	Male	10	4.00	30.25	222.50	-.280	.779
	Female	47	4.00	28.73			
	Total	57					
4. Learners should develop skills to negotiate varieties of English in multilingual communications.	Male	10	5.00	35.00	175.00	-1.465	.143
	Female	47	5.00	27.72			
	Total	57					
5. Learners should be encouraged to appreciate diverse cultures in intercultural communications.	Male	10	4.00	23.15	276.50	-1.382	.167
	Female	47	4.00	30.24			
	Total	57					
6. Learners should learn how to explain and express the cultural values they hold in the target language.	Male	10	4.00	26.10	206.00	-.654	.513
	Female	47	4.00	29.62			
	Total	57					
7. Learners should be exposed to diverse cultures.	Male	10	4.50	31.75	207.50	-.632	.528
	Female	47	4.00	28.41			
	Total	57					
8. Learners should develop skills to negotiate diversities of culture in intercultural communications.	Male	10	5.00	29.90	394.50	-.218	.827
	Female	47	5.00	28.81			
	Total	57					

Note: U = the Mann-Whitney test statistic, Mdn = Median, z = a standardized score, \*p<.05

## Conclusion

The study adopted a quantitative research method with a view to exploring variables affecting Vietnamese EFL lecturers' educational views and beliefs towards the EIL teaching. Based on the research sample, it can be concluded that there is a significant influence of international experience on teachers' beliefs whereas no influence is found with their teaching experience, qualifications, and gender. As the study participants are merely tertiary lecturers, the findings are not intended for generalizable purposes. It is recommended that further research should be conducted in other contexts such as for secondary school teachers. Moreover, the results are analyzed based on merely quantitative data; hence, more qualitative studies are suggested being conducted to triangulate the findings.

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## Appendix 1: Survey Questionnaire (English version)

Thank you for participating in this project. This questionnaire is designed for research purposes only, and all information will be kept confidential. The questionnaire will begin with some questions asking you about personal information. It, then, includes 8 statements regarding teaching English as an international language (EIL) principles.

Based on your experience with English language teaching and learning in Vietnam, please tick (✓) the appropriate response (strongly agree, agree to some extent, neutral, disagree to some extent, strongly disagree) to indicate how much you agree or disagree with each statement. Then please briefly explain your answers with a simple language.

Because its aim is not about the participants' English proficiency but about the participants' beliefs concerning English language teaching, each statement will be in both English and Vietnamese to ensure the validity of the answers.

Age: .....

Gender:            Male            Female

Teaching experience:	Novice (1-3 years)	Junior (4-9 years)
	Senior ( $\geq 10$ years)	

Overseas learning experience:                      Yes                      No

Highest degree:	BA	MA	PhD
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The target of teaching EIL is not the native-like.

Strongly agree      Agree      Neutral      Disagree      Strongly disagree

Learners should be encouraged to respect other varieties and its users as bilinguals and multilinguals.

Strongly agree      Agree      Neutral Disagree      Strongly disagree

Learners should be exposed to many varieties of English (Singlish, Indian English, ...) other than American English and British English.

Strongly agree      Agree      Neutral Disagree      Strongly disagree

Learners should develop skills to negotiate varieties of English in multilingual communications.

Strongly agree      Agree      Neutral Disagree      Strongly disagree

Learners should be encouraged to appreciate diverse cultures in intercultural communications.

Strongly agree      Agree      Neutral Disagree      Strongly disagree

Learners should learn how to explain and express the cultural values they hold in the target language.

Strongly agree      Agree      Neutral Disagree      Strongly disagree

Learners should be exposed to diverse cultures.

Strongly agree      Agree      Neutral      Disagree      Strongly disagree

Learners should develop skills to negotiate diversities of culture in intercultural communications.

Strongly agree

Agree

Neutral Disagree

Strongly disagree

# **Tone of voice or what was said? The impression non-native speakers of English make on Australian English native listeners**

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## **Abstract**

This study investigates the relative impact of verbal expression and tone of voice when native speakers of English form an impression of non-native speech. Four expressions of inquiry uttered in two tones by non-native speakers were judged by native listeners and analyzed using an ordinal Probit model. Plain expressions received lower scores than polite expressions in both tones, suggesting that appropriate expression is more important than tone of voice. It was found that while a friendly tone can enhance listeners' impression on speakers, particularly when the expression is plain, the impact of tone of voice is less evident when appropriate expressions are used. The study revealed no statistically significant gender differences. On the basis of the study, we offer a pedagogical suggestion that beginners need some instruction to guide their choice of textbook expressions for an effective real-world interaction.

**Keywords:** tone of voice, impression of speech, non-native speech, communication, language attitudes

## **Introduction**

In a multicultural society, people have plenty of opportunities to communicate with speakers from different language backgrounds. In the society of the target language, non-native speakers are often the subject of native speakers' negative observation (Eisenclas & Tsurutani, 2011; Gluszek & Doridio; 2010; Munro, 2003), ranging from comments "blunt or rude" to statements such as, "I cannot stand their tone of voice".

However, it is questionable whether listeners are really referring to the tone of voice or to the expressions the non-native speaker uses. The first language (L1) transfer could certainly affect the prosodic feature of their speech, and second language (L2) speakers can very often sound blunt because they do not have the capacity to pay attention to intonation while working out what to say. Yet non-native speakers' unconventional expressions may unintentionally convey an impolite impression. People at times may refer to the expression and to the sentence structure chosen for the utterance when they say the speaker's tone of voice is inappropriate. Non-native speakers may inadvertently use expressions that are inappropriate for a given situation

because they use a direct translation from their L1 or phrases from a textbook, while ignoring the context in which the expression should be used. It is therefore of interest to language educators to investigate the relative impact of tone and expression that L2 learners use in their utterances. This will also flag the importance of screening the expressions used in English phrase books published overseas.

Although prosodic features range from stress and rhythm to accentuation and intonation, intonation is the main prosodic feature explored in this study, since here our concern is the overall impression of speech based on speaker's tone of voice. The impacts of prosodic features of speech, which are difficult to describe and explain, are often marginalized in language teaching. Some people even undermine the role of prosody in second language acquisition and think their learned language will be acceptable as long as they use the right expression. This study investigated the relative impact of non-verbal and verbal behavior in the form of tone of voice and expression of inquiry, produced by non-native speakers of English. The result should also inform us of useful information about the role of prosody in communication for L2 learners. To this end, two contrasting tones of voice and expression were used as parameters of stimuli. Using these stimuli, the perception of L2 spoken English by Australian English native listeners was examined to see whether listeners reacted to unfriendly tones more strongly than to inappropriate expressions, or vice versa. Findings of the study provide useful information for language teachers and learners, and may inspire them to reconsider the impact of prosody in their teaching/learning.

### ***Verbal content vs. non-verbal cues***

People communicate successfully by using appropriate verbal content and non-verbal cues. Verbal content refers to the actual linguistic content delivered by the speaker, basically, what s/he has said. Non-verbal cues are usually given not only by the speaker's posture, physical movement, eye contact, facial expression and hand/body gestures but also by their tone of voice, namely any signals that convey the speaker's intention, apart from the linguistic content. The importance of non-verbal behavior in communication has been well acknowledged since the era Mehrabian (1971) presented a formula informed by his study on the impact of verbal and non-verbal behaviors. Mehrabian's now well-known formula is 7% verbal, 38% vocal (tone of voice) and 55% facial expression, when these three factors are inconsistent in expressing the speaker's feelings. His research was initially based on the feeling, "like-dislike", with suggestion of its possible application to feelings and attitudes in general (Mehrabian, 1971). However, this formula was challenged by various researchers and their findings imply that the different scenario prepared for particular communication setting and the different method of measurement used in their studies could bring out a different ratio. For example, Krauss, Apple Morency, Wenzel and Winton

(1981) reported verbal content to be the best predictor when judging speakers' emotions. However, Tusing and Dillard (2000) pointed to the significance of vocal marker in perceived dominance; non-native speakers' choice of linguistic expressions and foreign tone of voice could potentially add another dimension to their communication with native speakers.

The non-verbal cue this study aims to investigate is the tone of voice used by non-native speakers of English. Tone of voice was chosen to identify whether non-native speakers' tone of voice is an issue in communication rather than, or as well as, the expressions they use. The effect of tone of voice in communication has been investigated in various social settings where subtle nuance in tone can change the meaning of the speaker's message. The typical settings were conveying emotions and attitudes (Brown, Winter, Idemaru & Grawunder, 2014; Culpeper, 2011; Menezes, Erikson, & Franks, 2010; Nadeu & Prieto, 2011; Scherer, 2000; Shochi, Rilliard, & Erikson, 2009 ), telephone communication (Hecht & LaFrance, 1995), the speech of professionals working in medical or psychological health (Ambady, LaPlante, Nguyen, Rosenthal, Chaumeton, & Levinson, 2002) and computation (Pentland, 2005). On the other hand, studies that investigated the impact of tone of voice in relation to other verbal and non-verbal factors have been relatively few (Bryant & Fox Tree, 2005; Laplante & Ambady, 2002, 2003; Zuckerman, Amidon, Bishop & Pomerantz, 1982). Further, the scope of research in each of these studies is restricted to one parameter; i.e. prosodic features of ironic speech (Bryant & Fox Tree, 2005), which studies only irony among various emotions; and tone of voice vs. facial expression (Zuckerman et al., 1982), which discusses the relation between tone of voice and facial expression. This limited scope of studies is largely due to the difficulty of singling out the effect of tone of voice in natural communication and of creating an appropriate empirical setting to identify the role of tone of voice for expressing various emotions at once. No published study has reported on the impact of tone of voice in the communication of non-native speakers with native speaker interlocutors.

Laplante and Ambady's study (2002) compares the effect of tone of voice with the effect of verbal content, using native speakers of English. Their study involved the use of positive and negative comments, delivered in both positive and negative tones, in relation to students' academic results. They found that non-verbal cues played a limited role in changing the impression of the message, and tone of voice was less effective in delivering negative content. It was anticipated that participating students would naturally focus on the content of the message, as academic results are an extremely important part of students' lives and the tone of voice used in delivery did not make any difference to the impact of the result for them. The research design, using two tones and different expressions, can be replicated to test non-native speech in different message settings and content. It would be helpful for revealing the role/s that the tone of voice plays in native listeners' perceptions.

In this study, two tones of voice, friendly and blunt, were used to

inquire about directions in different degrees of polite expression uttered by a non-native speaker. The setting of inquiry is a very common and likely scenario that non-native speakers come across in their new language environment. The two tones, friendly and blunt, were chosen as friendly tones are believed to help communication in every social setting, whereas sounding blunt and arrogant is the last thing L2 learners wish for when they first enter into a new target language community. Thus, these factors were used as a parameter of stimuli. English does not have a variety of expressions to convey different degrees of formality or politeness as compared with Japanese or Korean in societies that are seen to be more vertically structured. Nevertheless, polite expressions play a major role when asking a favor even in English (Maynard, 1997). In the real world, the impact of tone of voice on messages is less easy to measure than some other non-verbal cues (e.g., facial expressions and gestures). As well, the context in which the message is delivered can interfere with the result. In this study, a controlled setting and a prepared scenario were used to extract information about utterances of the same sentence in different tones of voice. Although there are many ways to ask for direction, a few typical expressions were chosen after consulting with native English teachers. Increasing the number of stimuli lengthens the time of task unnecessarily and will make the semantic and pragmatic differences between sentences too subtle to make a judgement for listeners. Four sentences were sufficient to represent polite vs. plain versions and adequate to present the semantic and pragmatic differences between sentences. Four different inquiry sentences that differ in their level of politeness were prepared, ranging from a polite request to a very direct wh-question. Two expressions are considered to be polite expressions commonly used by native speakers, while the other two expressions are found under the section “asking directions” in a travel guide book published in Japan. One of latter two, “Where is XX?”, is the direct translation of a Japanese sentence of inquiry. The utterances captured in laboratory recordings are not exactly the same as natural utterances, however the stimulus sentences were recorded by four experienced language teachers to make sure the difference between the two tones was maintained. All four teachers’ first language was Japanese and all had similar academic backgrounds (postgraduate degrees).

### **Methodology of listening task**

The focus of this study is the relative impact of non-native speakers’ tones of voice over the verbal content of their speech, as perceived by native listeners; i.e., how tone of voice influences individuals’ perceptions of different levels of polite expressions of inquiry. Two different tones of voice and four different expressions of inquiry recorded by non-native speakers were mixed to create 32 stimuli. Native speakers of Australian English listened to the speech stimuli and judged their impression of the speaker using a Likert scale, for example 3 was good, 2 was neutral, and 1 was bad. Analysis of their scores

should be able to determine the relative importance of tone of voice over verbal content in their judgement.

### ***Materials and material construction***

The following sentences of inquiry that are commonly addressed to strangers were used as materials. The word “central” [sɛntɹəl] has the alveolar approximants [ɹ] and [l], which are difficult sounds for Japanese native speakers (Bradlow, Akahane-Yamada, Pisoni, & Tohkura, 1999) and can easily enhance the trace of foreign accent in their production.

- 1) Excuse me. Could you please tell me the way to the central station?
- 2) Excuse me. Can you tell me the way to the central station?
- 3) Excuse me. Where is the central station?
- 4) Excuse me. I want to go to the central station.

Sentences 1) and 2) are considered to be polite ways to ask direction by native speakers. Sentences 3) and 4) are expressions that appear in the travel guidebooks available from bookshops in Japan. In particular, 3) is a direct translation of a Japanese expression of inquiry and is often used by beginners of English. It is expected that the first two sentences, 1) and 2), will give better impression of the speaker than the second two sentences, 3) and 4).

Four Japanese native speakers (two males and two females) who have each resided in Australia for more than 20 years recorded the four sentences in two different tones. These speakers are fluent in English, but had clear traces of a Japanese accent. All of the speakers were Japanese language instructors, and were good at acting to produce different tones of voice. Their ages ranged from mid-forties to mid-fifties. The speakers were given the following instruction: Please say the phrases 1) – 4) nicely (A). Then, say them again arrogantly (B). Four friendly versions were recorded first, then four arrogant versions followed. Speakers produced each version twice and the first trial was used unless there was an acoustic flaw in performance.

In their performances, the friendly tones had a higher pitch, wider pitch range and slower speech rate, while utterances with blunt tones were delivered in a low pitch and faster speech rate. (Only male speaker 1 used a consistent speech rate for all four sentences in opposite ways.) This corresponds with prosodic characteristics of friendly and arrogant speech reported in previous studies (Menezes et al., 2010; Nadeu & Prieto, 2011; Tsurutani, Shi, & Minematsu, 2016) The following table presents the acoustic measurements of their performance. The longest sentence, Sentence 1, was used for the purpose of presenting a clear difference between two versions of tone in measurement.

Table 1

*Acoustic measurements of 4 speakers (measured in Sentence 1)*

Speakers	Speech rate (syllable/sec)*		Duration of utterance (msec)		Average Pitch (Hz)		Pitch range (Hz)	
	F	UF	F	UF	F	UF	F	UF
Male 1	5.99	5.40	2.67	2.96	153	> 147	174	> 107
Male 2	4.13	4.98	3.87	3.21	156	> 147	167	> 131
Female 1	4.18	5.59	3.83	2.86	239	> 210	223	> 161
Female 2	4.66	4.68	3.43	3.42	260	> 231	220	> 167

\*Faster speech has a higher figure.

F=friendly, UF=unfriendly

Their level of performance was checked by two other native speakers who have knowledge of linguistics. It was confirmed that the two tones clearly presented intended tones.

### ***Participants in the listening task***

Ten male and 12 female Australian English speakers participated in the listening task, receiving a small payment for doing so. Their ages ranged from 39 to 69 (average age 57 years). The researcher contacted people who do not have regular contact with non-native speakers, to avoid possible bias in judgement by having a foreign friend who has a similar accent. In a multicultural society like Australia, people cannot avoid having contact with non-native speakers while carrying out their everyday activities, such as shopping or dining in ethnic restaurants. However, these contacts do not occur on a regular basis and were considered to be a minor part of the participants' everyday lives.

### ***Method of listening task***

The stimuli were given to the participants either as a CD or sound file. In the sound file, following on from three practice sentences, the stimulus sentence was played twice, each with a 1 second interval and a 3 second inter stimulus interval. The listeners were asked to judge whether the utterance gave a good impression, a neutral, or a bad impression on a 3-point Likert scale. A 3-point scale was sufficient for a quick impressionistic judgement and was suitable for calculating the result by ordinal probit modeling. Two different versions of randomized order of stimuli presentation were used and distributed randomly among participants. The entire task took approximately 15 to 20 minutes for participants to complete, including the information sheet for their background. Whether the perceived impression was ranked according to the goodness of tone; A -> B ( 1) A -> 4) A, 1) B -> 4) B), or ranked according to the appropriateness of expressions; 1) A, 1) B -> 4) A, 4) B would determine the strength of the two factors.

## Results

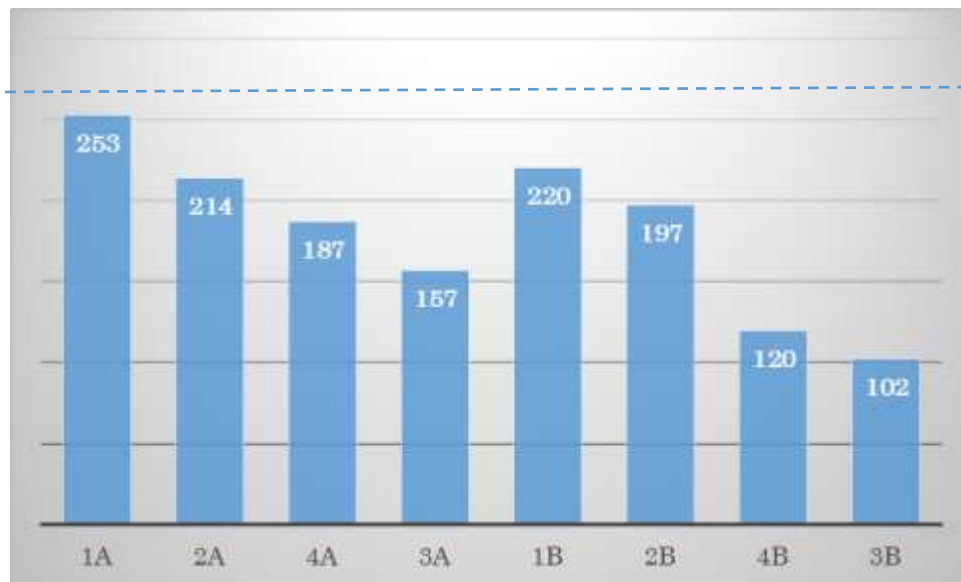
The data were analyzed using an ordinal Probit model (Agresti, 2010). The gender of both listeners and speakers was found to be a non-significant variable at the 95% level. From the parameter estimates we observed, Sentence 1 scored the highest response, followed by Sentence 2, 4 then 3. Tone B (blunt) generally received a lower score than Tone A (friendly), with this effect being lower in sentences with more polite expressions.

Table 2

*Parameter estimates and credible intervals for model terms.*  
(Significance is indicated with an asterisk)

Term	Parameter Estimate
Intercept	2.797 (2.412, 3.204)*
Sentence 2	-1.284 (-1.737, -0.849)*
Sentence 3	-2.396 (-2.851, -1.958)*
Sentence 4	-1.820 (-2.272, -1.386)*
Tone B	-1.134 (-1.594, -0.690)*
Sentence 2: Tone B	0.766 (0.205, 1.337)*
Sentence 3: Tone B	-0.217 (-0.806, 0.382)
Sentence 4: Tone B	-0.251 (-0.821, 0.326)
$\gamma^2$	1.435 (1.286, 1.589)

The following graph shows the total scores the stimulus sentences received. As expected, Sentence 1 had the highest score, followed by Sentences 2, 4 and 3.



264

Figure 1. Total scores obtained from 22 listeners (highest possible score=264)

The performance of 1A is close to the highest possible score, which means that native listeners did not mark down non-native speech due to the speakers' accent. Between the two versions of the same sentence, Tone A always had a higher score than Tone B, which suggests that tone helps to give a better impression particularly in the blunt expressions, as uttered in Sentences 4 and 3. However, the effect of tone is weaker in Sentences 1 and 2. This suggests that a friendly tone can be particularly helpful when using a blunt expression. If speakers use a friendly tone even when uttering a plain expression such as that of 4A, "I want to go to the central station", it can sound almost as good as the more polite expressions spoken in an arrogant tone, in Sentence 2B. It is very likely that the wrong choice of expression by a non-native speaker annoys the local people who the non-native speaker asks for help. The posterior probability of each sentence and tone being scored 1–3 is given in Table 3.

Table 3

*Posterior probability (95% confidence interval) of each sentence and tone being perceived as scores 1–3*

	Score 1	Score 2	Score 3
Sentence 1 Tone A	0.003 (0.001, 0.008)	0.088 (0.040, 0.151)	0.910 (0.842, 0.959)*
Sentence 1 Tone B	0.050 (0.026, 0.083)	0.361 (0.284, 0.436)	0.589 (0.489, 0.686)*
Sentence 2 Tone A	0.067 (0.037, 0.107)	0.402 (0.329, 0.472)	0.531 (0.433, 0.628)*
Sentence 2 Tone B	0.128 (0.080, 0.187)	0.485 (0.426, 0.541)*	0.387 (0.298, 0.480)
Sentence 3 Tone A	0.346 (0.260, 0.437)	0.502 (0.447, 0.554)*	0.152 (0.098, 0.216)
Sentence 3 Tone B	0.826 (0.742, 0.896)*	0.164 (0.100, 0.239)	0.009 (0.003, 0.020)
Sentence 4 Tone A	0.166 (0.110, 0.234)	0.509 (0.456, 0.560)*	0.324 (0.242, 0.414)
Sentence 4 Tone B	0.657 (0.560, 0.749)*	0.309 (0.232, 0.386)	0.034 (0.016, 0.060)

\*The highest percentage in each column

This table provides the distribution of each score, which was not revealed in Figure 1, and supports the same result. Sentence 1A provides a good impression 91% of the time, while that possibility is reduced to 58.9% by the use of Tone B. This reduction is as wide as the increase in the bad impression made by the use of Tone B in Sentences 3 and 4, at 48% (82.6–34.6) and 49.5% (65.7–16.6) respectively. On the other hand, the decrease is not so obvious in Sentence 2, as the score goes down only from 53.1% to 38.7%.

The findings in this section are summarized in the following two points:

- 1) A friendly tone helps to improve the impression of the speaker, particularly when the expression they use is blunt.

- 2) When polite expressions are used, the role of tone is not as significant as in blunt expressions.

## **Discussion and Implications**

In this study, utterances with a polite expression had higher scores than the ones with a plain expression regardless of tones used for the utterance. It means that listeners primarily form their impression of a speaker based on the content of their utterance. In everyday communication, to some extent speakers are able to predict what their interlocutor will say next in the course of conversation. Non-native speech does not always follow this norm, and an expression that is unusual and unexpected for the native speaker-interlocutor can hinder smooth communication. Dismayed native speakers in this situation could end up commenting on the non-native speech as an unfriendly tone of voice.

In this study, the tone of voice did impact on the speakers' impression, but not as strongly as verbal content, which supports the finding of the previous study on native speakers' performance (Laplante & Ambady, 2003). That is, it is more likely that native listeners are referring to the expression the non-native speaker uses when they say "tone of voice". No one intends to offend someone they have not met in their brief first encounter. Non-native learners would not intentionally use an arrogant tone of voice, however, due to their lack of pragmatic knowledge, they could sometimes use an inappropriate expression as observed in the selection of inquiry expressions in the Japanese travel guide. This would be the case particularly for beginners who rely heavily on a textbook or a guidebook for their choice of expression to use. The expressions in the phrase books should be checked carefully by educators to avoid unnecessarily unpleasant experiences for both listeners and speakers. At the same time, language instructors need to make learners aware that expressions in textbooks for beginners use a simple grammar and are not necessarily appropriate for some social settings. Learners are also to be reminded to check the context when they use the expression they have newly learned. The expressions and context used in this study limited the scope of the investigation to inquiry of directions in non-native speech. A different context and setting could be explored in a future study.

In order to improve the quality of communication in a multicultural society, native listeners need to be considerate of the difficulty non-native speakers experience, while non-native speakers need to pay more attention to the appropriateness of their expression. This study provides evidence that tone does play a role in the way the listener judges the speaker, however this is a secondary factor. The primary factor is the verbal content in which the sentence is expressed. In the study, two contrasting tones were used to examine the role of tone of voice in oral communication. However, in real life it is highly unlikely that a deliberately arrogant tone of voice would be used by non-native speakers when asking directions. When listeners do not form a

good impression of non-native speakers in their first, brief encounter, the problem could lie in the speaker's lack of pragmatic knowledge in choosing the right expression. Both native listeners and non-native speakers need to be aware of this point and work towards better communication.

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#### **Note on Contributor**

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## World Englishes and Cross-Cultural Communication

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### Abstract

This study was designed to examine the differences between two world Englishes in an effort to add to the body of knowledge relative to world Englishes and cross-cultural communication. Specifically, select grammatical differences between a group of Filipino English language teachers and a Standard American English were examined. Differences between the grammars of the two English varieties included article use, collocations, pluralization of mass nouns, question formation, and verb tense. Proceeding from the premise that cross-cultural communication can be problematic due to the differences between world Englishes, in this case, grammar, this study showed differences in grammar between the two Englishes that could result in miscommunication.

**Keywords:** cross-cultural communication, English language, world Englishes, English grammar, varieties of English

### Introduction

English language teaching in the Philippines has become very popular in Asia (McGeown, 2012, Strother, 2015). Instead of traveling to more expensive locations, people such as Chinese, Korean, Taiwanese, and Vietnamese are turning toward Filipinos to develop their English language skills (Chavez, 2014, Hicap, 2009, Maruko, 2013, McGeown, 2012). Among these English-language-seeking travelers are South Koreans who make up a large part of the English language classrooms in the Philippines (Hicap, 2009). However, for the past several years, many South Koreans have been staying home and taking English classes online with Filipino English language teachers (FELTs) perhaps in part, because (i) travel has become less of an option due to economic constraints (Mundy, 2016) and (ii) due to an increase in crime related to Koreans in the Philippines (Diola, 2014; Palatino, 2014). As a result of this demand for not only classroom English language teachers, but also for online English language teachers, there is a high demand for qualified FELTs who can engage their learners and facilitate improved English skills.

Although, Filipino is the Filipinos' mother tongue (L1), Filipinos have a reputation in Asia as having developed an English (L2) more oriented toward American English (AE) (McGeown, 2012, p. 1), the preferred version for South Koreans (Jung, 2010, p. 149; Strother 2015). Nevertheless, the Filipino English is a cultural English, one of many World Englishes (WE) peculiar to

cultures around the world who have developed their own version of English as an L2 to suit their local needs (Yoshikawa, 2008, p. 225). Therefore, as can be expected, there will be some challenges and even miscommunication between the English of one culture and that of another (Essossomo, 2015, p. 99; Gilsdorf 2002, p. 365, Jung, 2010, p. 145; Kilickaya, 2009, p. 36; Tweedie & De Almeida, n.d., p. 3; World Englishes, n.d., p. 35; Yoshikawa, 2008, p. 219).

As a personnel manager and teacher trainer consultant in a medium-sized online English language center in the Philippines with on average 50-70 FELTs that cater to Korean, English language students, I have regular and continued contact with FELTs. One of the main reasons for assuming this role was my background having been born and raised in the U.S.A., and one who speaks American English. An additional consideration is that I have been immersed in the Filipino culture for nearly 18 years, thus would be able to interact readily with people in the workplace. Among other duties, I conduct quality assurance observations and in-house proficiency training in teacher classroom performance as well as monitor their English proficiency oriented more toward a Standard American English (SAE) as per customer preference. The term SAE is a reference to an American form of English that is standard English, i.e. “that is well established by usage in the formal and informal speech and writing of the educated” (Merriam-webster.com 2017), as can be found in traditional grammar and pronunciation materials that refer to American English. An additional responsibility that I have is interviewing applicants and training new teachers how to perform their tasks. During interviews and in new teacher training, I listen for grammar use among other factors.

As a result, over a three-year period I have been exposed to approximately 200 teachers and teacher trainees and have encountered sometimes surprising variations of English between the two Englishes between this group and SAE which has caused some confusion for myself and that could, and at times does cause customer (student) complaints regarding teachers’ English skills. Thus, part of initial and ongoing teacher training involves English training in a Standard American English (SAE) grammar.

Minor grammar issues among teachers are not cause for concern as they are thought to be simple lapses, and can be addressed in training or in post-observation feedback. However, some deviations from a standard form of grammar tend to be more habitual than others, which is indicative of commonality among this specific group of FELTs, possibly FELTs outside of this group, and or perhaps Filipino English speakers in general. Since these are current or budding English language teachers catering to a customer base oriented toward an SAE version, it is good business for them to be more familiar with SAE and how they are presenting it to their students, either directly or indirectly (through modeling), as indeed, we cannot ignore form (DeCarrico, 2009, p. vii, Floris, 2014, p. 221; Genc & Bada, 2010, p. 147, Hamid, Zhu, & Baldauf, 2014, p. 89; Pickering, 2006, pp. 8-9; Swan, 2005, p.

ix; Yoshikawa, 2008, pp. 219-220; Young & Walsh, 2010, p. 132; Van den Doel, 2007, p. 33).

The purpose of this paper is to examine commonly observed differences in English grammar between two varieties of English in order to identify differences in grammar that may create the potential for miscommunication in a cross-variety setting. In a broader scope, this paper will present communication in general between two WEs and the potential for misunderstanding that may arise as a result of the grammatical differences. Finally, this paper will address the WE stage and the concern for each culture to have their own variation while at the same time retaining the ability to communicate outside of their English community– cross-cultural English communication. This research proceeds from the assumption that cross-cultural communication can be problematic due to the differences between WEs. Toward that end, the grammar being used between two varieties of Englishes is being examined in this study to determine if this is accurate.

## **Methodology**

This research can be classified as an auto-ethnographic qualitative study limited to my three-year experience interacting face-to-face with a combined total of approximately 200 applicants, trainees, and teachers, within the environment of the online English language center I consult with. I collectively refer to these individuals as the U-Group throughout the remainder of this paper. Common differences which have led at times to confusion between myself and the U-Group and have potential for miscommunication beyond the teacher-training and English-language-teaching environment are encountered on a weekly basis by way of: teacher-applicant interviews, in teacher-applicant writing, in new-teacher training conversations, in new-teacher training, in new-teacher teaching observations, complaints made by Korean language students (young and old), teacher quality assurance observations and spot checks, my own interactions with all categories, and teacher weekly writing assignments (one-paragraph each on a specific topic), and finally, my own observations and reflections.

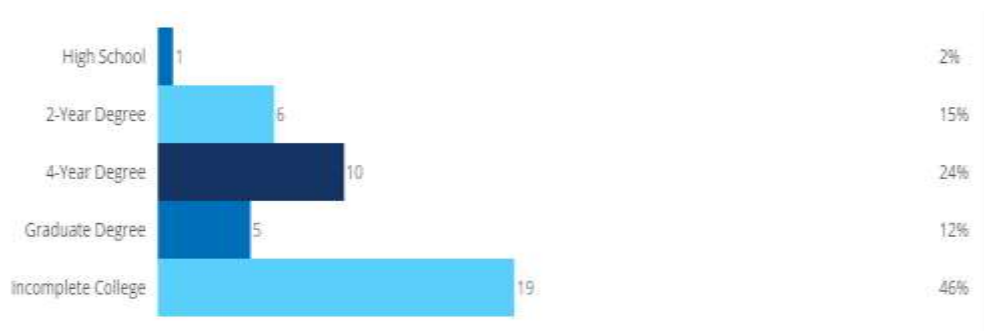
## **Demographics**

The U-Group, predominantly female, represents various ages, ethnic backgrounds, city sizes, and educational backgrounds whose English levels are defined at or around the Intermediate-Mid to Advanced-Mid levels as per the ACTFL English Proficiency Guidelines 2012 which are used as a reference during teacher interviews and training. The approximate demographics of the U-Group (based on a survey of the 50 current teachers conducted at the time of this study) are broken down into Figures 1–5 and are representative of the demographics of the larger group.



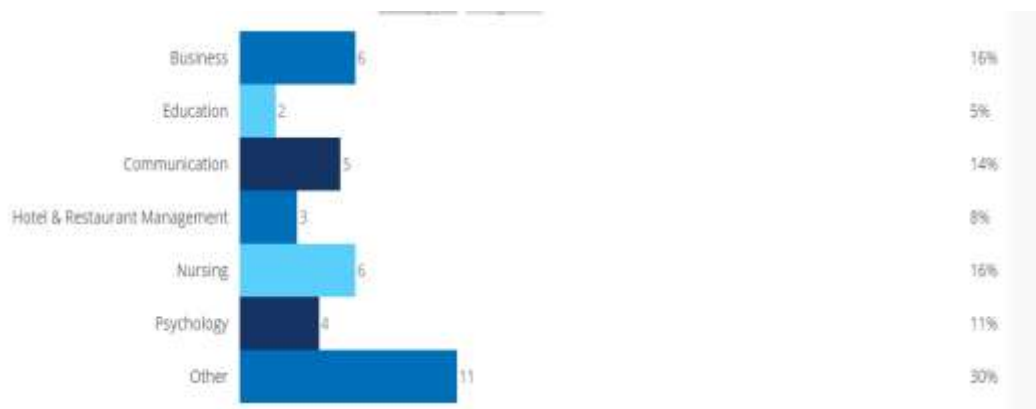
*Figure 1. Teacher Ethnic Backgrounds*

A total of 40 U-Group members responded to the survey on ethnic backgrounds. Figure 1 shows that the majority of teachers (29) are from a Tagalog ethnic background which encompasses the area of Luzon. Cebuano, Ilocano, Bikol, Waray, and Other backgrounds are represented, but minimally (1), while Bisaya and Ilongo are represented at somewhat higher levels: (2) and (4) respectively.



*Figure 2. Teacher Education Levels*

A total of 41 U-Group members responded to the survey on highest education levels attained. Figure 2 shows that the majority of teachers have not completed college degrees (19), while others have completed 2-year (6), 4-year (10), and graduate degrees (5).



*Figure 3. Number of Teacher Education Majors*

A total of 37 U-Group members responded to the survey on education majors. Figure 3 shows a variety of educational pursuits including business (6), education (2), communication (5), hotel & restaurant management (3), nursing (6), psychology (4), and others (11).



*Figure 4. Teacher Age Ranges*

A total of 46 U-Group members responded to the survey on age ranges. Figure 4 shows that the majority of teachers are between the ages of 18-25 (21), while others represent the ages of 26-30 (9), 31-35 (9), 36-40 (4), 41-45 (2), and 50+ (1).



*Figure 5. Teacher City Backgrounds*

A total of 40 U-Group members responded to the survey on city backgrounds. Figure 5 shows the majority of teachers grew up in rural environments (21) apart from more modernized and or 'Englishified' areas. The remaining members came from large cities (8) and medium-sized cities (11).

### ***Terminology***

The terms cross-cultural communication, cross-variety communication, and cross-community will be used interchangeably in this paper to indicate communication in English taking place outside of particular speech community.

The term variations can be a somewhat ambiguous and or relative term. As taken from the Merriam-Webster online Dictionary (Variation, 2016), it can be defined as: (i) a change in the form, position, condition, or amount of something, and (ii) something that is similar to something else but different in some way. For purposes of this study, variations will refer to instances where the grammar used by the U-Group conflicts with Standard American English.

Standard American English grammar was cross-checked using an academic reference (De Carrico, 2009) a reference on practical English usage (Swan, 2005), and a linguistic reference (Radford, 2009). With regard to checking collocation differences in terms of phrasal verbs and prepositional verbs, noun phrases, and or preposition use, my preference was for the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) a collocation database run by Brigham-Young University, Utah, USA, which would have provided specific percentages of collocation use. However, due to technical issues that prevented me from being able to utilize the website. Consequently, I had no other recourse but to utilize free online collocation dictionaries such as ozdic.com, Cambridge Dictionary (dictionary.cambridge.org/), and prowritingaid.com. Terms, definitions, and countability were checked utilizing three online lexicons: Longman dictionary (<http://www.ldoceonline.com/>), Collins Dictionary (<http://www.collinsdictionary.com/>), and Dictionary.com.

Specific grammatical functions were categorized into such categories as tense and pluralization of mass nouns (Higgins, 2003: 627, Sykes, 2015, p. 36), where the researchers asked question to teachers (Higgins 2003) and certain groups in Britain (Sykes, 2015) as to what each group considered to be acceptable English. Additional functions not found in the researches but which surfaced in this study included article use, collocations, contractions, and question formation. This study differs from previous studies in that previous studies surveyed respondents on what they thought was correct or incorrect in terms of usage. However, this study examines the differences between two specific Englishes.

The term common can also be a somewhat ambiguous and or relative term. As can be noted from the Merriam-Webster online Dictionary

(Common, 2016), (1) it can mean “belonging to or shared by two or more people or groups”, (2) it can mean “done by many people”, and (3) it can mean “occurring or appearing frequently: not rare”. For purposes of this study, the term common will refer to frequent grammar usage variations encountered with the U-Group in the process of a normal work day.

## Results

It is important to note at the beginning of this discussion that this paper does not approach the subject from the perspective of prescriptive grammar– what should or should not be used as grammar. As DeCarrico (2000, pp. ix-x) rightly expresses “[n]o value judgments are made using terms 'good', 'bad', 'correct' or 'incorrect.'” Though some English cultures are creating their own reference sources (Sykes, 2015, p. 34), to my knowledge there is no Filipino-English reference source with which one can ascertain the exact meanings of the U-Group members in the previous samples. However, through training, interaction, and interviews, the meaning of the U-Group members’ English was ascertained. When matched against SAE references, variations can be seen between the two Englishes. While time and space limit my development of each item presented in the results, a select few of the more salient results can be developed here.

The following common variations between the U-Group’s usage of English grammar compared to SAE and as compared to the reference sources surfaced during evaluation of the data (Table 1). It is important to note, that these are representative examples of repeat variations in grammatical function between the two Englishes, not isolated incidences.

Table 1

*Examples of Common Grammar Variations between U-Group English and SAE*

RefNo.	Recurring U-Group English	Grammatical Function	SAE Equivalent
1	You have to take a medicine every day. Have you been to forest? Have you seen frog? Please read model answer. Today is holiday in Korea. Can you do a magic? I think it is about the same sex marriage. There's a grass.	Article Use	You have to take medicine every day. Have you ever been to a forest? Have you ever seen a frog? Please read the model answer. Today is a holiday in Korea. Can you do magic? I think it is about same sex marriage? There's grass. I was sure that there will be

	I was sure that there will be a trouble...		trouble.
2	<p>I was lonely and envious with other kids... They don't care about with other people</p> <p>Despite of</p> <p>The paragraph tackles about English learners' different perspectives on learning English.</p> <p>I never lose hope on someone or something.</p> <p>I commit a mistake</p> <p>What happened to your weekend?</p> <p>Good luck to your date.</p> <p>I am interested to that position.</p> <p>Ability to work on high stress situations.</p>	Collocations	<p>I was lonely and envious of the other kids... They didn't care about other people.</p> <p>Despite</p> <p>c. The paragraph tackles English learners' different perspectives on learning English.</p> <p>I never lose hope in someone or something</p> <p>I made a mistake</p> <p>How was your weekend?</p> <p>Good luck on your date.</p> <p>I am interested in that position.</p> <p>Ability to work in high stress situations.</p>
3	<p>It + was (It's)</p> <p>There + was (There's)</p> <p>He/She + was (He's/She's)</p>	Contractions	<p>It was</p> <p>There was</p> <p>He/She was</p>
4	<p>Homeworks</p> <p>Paperworks</p> <p>Seatworks</p> <p>Staffs</p> <p>Advices</p> <p>Grammars</p> <p>Stuffs</p>	Pluralization of Mass Nouns	<p>Homework</p> <p>Paperwork</p> <p>Seatwork</p> <p>Staff</p> <p>Advice</p> <p>Grammar</p> <p>Stuff</p>
5	<p>What is your favorite animal do you like?</p> <p>What do you think are they doing?</p> <p>How does your house look like?</p> <p>Do you like to have a pet?</p> <p>What do you think are these?</p> <p>You think where are</p>	Question Formation	<p>What is your favorite animal?</p> <p>What do you think they are doing?</p> <p>What does your house look like?</p> <p>Would you like to have a pet?</p> <p>What do you think these are?</p> <p>Where do you think they</p>

	they?		are?
6	<p>Every time I talk to you I really felt happy.  Drinking water right after you woke up is good.  [Deleted]  I will going to show you a picture ...  I did not consider the consequences of my actions. [meant to indicate a habit]  My friends usually say that whenever I asked them...  My greatest accomplishment is when I had my job  [Speaking of a current situation – current employment]  You kept returning my questions [Referring to now].</p>	Verb Tense	<p>Every time I talk to you I feel happy.  Drinking water right after you wake up is good.  [Deleted]  I am going to show you a picture.  I do not consider the consequences of my actions.  My friends usually say that whenever I ask them...  My greatest accomplishment is when I got my job [here]  You keep returning my questions.</p>

Table 1 shows six areas of common grammar variations between the U-Group members' English and SAE in terms of article use, collocations, contractions, pluralization of mass nouns, question formation, and verb tense.

### *Article use*

Reference no. 1, Article Use, shows the differences between U-Group members' English and SAE in terms of missing or added articles where there would not ordinarily be in SAE. For example, U-Group members used articles with typical SAE mass count nouns such as in Items:

- 1.a. a medicine
- 1.f. a magic
- 1.g. the same sex marriage
- 1.h. a grass
- 1.i. a trouble

While omitting articles typically used in SAE for countable nouns such as Items:

- 1.b. [a/the] forest,
- 1.c. [a/the] frog
- 1.d. [a] model answer
- 1.e. [a] holiday

In and of itself, article usage may be considered a minor grammatical issue. However, when compounded with additional differences, the potential for miscommunication between these two Englishes is a reasonable assumption. For example, in Item 1.a., the statement is, “You have to take a medicine every day.” The conflict between the U-Group English and the SAE may be the question of what medicine the U-Group member is referring to. Whereas, the U-Group member was referring to medicine in general in the SAE, “You have to take medicine every day,” the SAE user may understand “a medicine” to mean a particular medicine. The context would likely aid in communication; however, it would constitute a breakdown in communication initially.

### ***Collocations***

Reference no. 2, Collocations, shows differences between the two Englishes in terms of collocations. The U-Group examples of collocations were checked against free online collocation dictionaries such as [ozdic.com](http://ozdic.com), Cambridge Dictionary ([dictionary.cambridge.org/](http://dictionary.cambridge.org/)), and [prowritingaid.com](http://prowritingaid.com) for the same collocations in SAE. The following results were yielded:

- Item 2.a. envious with: No results were found.
- Item 2.b. despite of: No results were found.
- Item 2.c. tackles about: No results found.
- Item 2.d. hope on: No results found.
- Item 2.e. commit [a] mistake: No results found.
- Item 2.h. interested to: No results found.
- Items: 2.f. What happened to your weekend, 2.g. good luck to your date, and 2.i. work on high stress situations, were not checked with a collocation dictionary as they do contain collocations that are used in SAE.

Collocations refer to word combinations and were triple-checked against SAE references. For example: Item 2.f. What happened ‘to’ your weekend, implies that the weekend was somehow a disaster by use of the preposition to, e.g. What happened ‘to’ your car? implies something negative happened to it), whereas the U-Group member is expressing a question about how the student’s weekend was if using SAE. A second example comes from Item 2.g. good luck to your date, which implies that the member is wishing good luck toward the student’s date (the person), giving the impression in SAE that the student himself is somewhat of a terrible date (with similar negative

connotations as referenced in Item 2.f. above), whereas based on my observations of these settings, the member is expressing a kind comment that the date would be a good one for the student.

A final example from the Collocations category from Item 2.i. [The ability to] work on high stress situations, is certainly understandable in SAE from the context of a job interview. However, from a perspective of collocation in SAE, it implies the speaker has some ability to perform maintenance upon stressful situations (work on n.d., work on somebody/something 2016) much like the expressions work on your car, work on a dance move, work on a report, etc., carry a similar idea in SAE. The thought wanting to be expressed from the U-Group member in SAE, is that she has the ability to function (with)in stressful situations. Based on these examples, it is reasonable to assume that collocation use does have the potential for miscommunication between these two Englishes. The context would likely aid in communication; however, it would constitute a breakdown in communication initially. Cross-cultural communication between users from both varieties of English may become problematic in terms of collocations when uncertainty arises between intended meanings.

### ***Contractions***

Reference no. 3, Contractions, shows differences between U-Group English and SAE in terms of forming contractions. Examples from the U-Group include Items:

- 3.a. It + was (e.g. It's)
- 3.b. There + was (e.g. There's)
- 3.c. He/She+ was (e.g. He's/She's).

However, contracting was with pronouns does not fall under SAE (Swan 2009: 121). Examples from the U-Group include using the past form of be-verbs to form contractions. Examples such as It + was (e.g. It's), There + was (e.g. There's), and He/She+ was (e.g. He's/She's) were discovered. Cross-cultural communication between users from both varieties of English can breakdown when uncertainty arises between intended references to past or present.

### ***Pluralization of mass nouns***

Reference no. 4, Pluralization of Mass Nouns, shows differences between Englishes in terms of pluralizing mass nouns which are not commonly pluralized in SAE. However, when cross-checked with SAE lexicons: Longman dictionary (<http://www.ldoceonline.com/>), Collins Dictionary (<http://www.collinsdictionary.com/>), and Dictionary.com, the following results were yielded:

Item 4.a. Homeworks: 3 of 3 lexicons did not reveal a plural form of the mass noun homework.

Item 4.b. Paperworks: 3 of 3 lexicons did not reveal a plural form of the mass noun paperwork.

Item 4.c. Seatworks: 3 of 3 lexicons did not reveal a plural form of the mass noun seatwork.

Item 4.d. Staffs: 2 of 3 lexicons did not reveal a plural form of the mass noun staff.

Item 4.e. Advices: 3 of 3 lexicons did not reveal a plural form of the mass noun advice.

Item 4.f. Grammars: 3 of 3 lexicons did not reveal a plural form of the mass noun grammar.

Item 4.g. Stuffs: 3 of 3 lexicons did not reveal a plural form of the mass noun stuff.

Of itself, pluralization of mass nouns may also be considered a minor grammatical issue. However, when compounded with additional differences, the potential for miscommunication between these two Englishes is a reasonable assumption. For example, the use of “advices” in Item 4.e. can be misconstrued by the SAE listener to be a different word because the SAE user would not normally expect to hear “advice” in a pluralized form. Therefore, it is possible that “She gave me some advices” would initially be misunderstood as possibly, “She gave me \_\_\_\_s.” There would need to be a period of clarification between both users as a result which would impede smooth communication.

### ***Question formation***

Reference no. 5, Question Formation, shows differences between the two Englishes with respect to question formation. For example, in Items:

5.a. What is your favorite animal do you like?

5.b. What do you think are they doing?

5.e. What do you think are these?

In the category of Question Formation, we can see two potential questions in one in Items 5.a, 5.b., and 5.g. (e.g. What is...? + What... do...?). This varies with SAE question formation rules where one question per statement is grammatical. In the remaining examples from the U-Group members, we see variation in question-word use (i.e. the use of how than what in 5.c. How does your house look like?). Use of how is a request for more detail, whereas what is a request for general information without limited choices (Swan 2005, p. 611). In 5.d. Do you like to have a pet? we can see a variance between U-Group use of auxiliary verb ‘do’ and SAE use of ‘would’

in a similar situation, ‘would’ being less direct than ‘do’ (Swan 2005, p. 436). In 5.f. You think where are they? we can see a variance between U-Group English and SAE in terms of fronting or the head phrase. Additionally, among U-Group members, there seems to be an extra future inflection in comments referencing immediate future activities: 6.d. I will going to show you a picture, which varies with the singular use of inflection in SAE (e.g. I am going to... or I will...). The data clearly shows that there are differences between the two Englishes.

Of themselves, question formation differences may not be problematic in cross-cultural communication as SAE users do not always follow their own grammar rules in terms of question formation. However, the possibility of compounding one category upon another can create potential confusion in cross-variety communication.

### ***Verb tense***

Reference no. 6, Verb Tense, shows differences between U-Group English and SAE in terms of their use of verb tense.

- 6.a. Every time I talk to you I really felt happy.
- 6.b. Drinking water right after you woke up is good.
- 6.c. [Deleted]
- 6.e. I did not consider the consequences of my actions [meant to indicate a habit].
- 6.f. My friends usually say that whenever I asked them...
- 6.g. My greatest accomplishment is when I had my job [Speaking of a current situation– current employment].
- 6.h. You kept returning my questions [Referring to now].

However, when examined in light of SAE grammar rules of usage, we discover some differences in how U-Group English tense usage differs from that of SAE. We can see within the sentences of the U-Group members a shifting between past and present references that conflicts with the SAE continuity of tense. For example, in 6.a. “Every time I talk to you I really felt happy.” (SAE: “Every time I talk to you I feel happy.”), we see frequency and present tense references (“every time... talk”) in conflict with the past form (felt) to indicate a present and recurring truth; in 6.g. “My greatest accomplishment is when I had my job.” (SAE: “My greatest accomplishment is when I got my job.”), we see conflict between the use of the present be-verb (is) to represent a past reference (an accomplishment) and the past be-verb (had) to indicate accomplishment. Cross-cultural communication between users from both varieties of English can become problematic in terms of verb tense when uncertainty arises between skewed references to past or present.

### *Potential for misunderstandings*

In a broader sense, this research reveals the potential for miscommunication between users of varieties of English. Much of misunderstandings between peoples can be cleared up within context; however, there are some that defy context and create potential for misunderstandings. As Gilsdorf (2002, p. 366) points out, “For business and other international purposes, a core of English has to remain understandable to all English users” and “[f]or business’s purposes, much depends on a core of language remaining intelligible to all speakers of English... No one would like to be in the position of being the sole remaining speaker of a really, really, really correct English” (p. 372).

She is having a headache, she had a headache, or she has a headache? Which meaning is being conveyed in an environment where communication is taking place between two Englishes? The FELTs conflation with the contractions in SAE combining past with pronouns has great potential for misunderstanding. For example, if a U-Group FELT said, “She’s going to resign”, there may be some doubt in one’s mind of whether the idea was that she ‘was’ going to resign or that she plans to resign. A weak example, agreed, however, it illustrates a potentially more complicated issue. Can we forsake precision in English in order to accommodate all in cross-variety communications? For the sake of offending other speakers of English shall we create an environment where interpretation is necessary between English speakers from different communities? Each member carries their own meaning and nuance if left without parameters.

Having a standard form of English between Englishes is not a case of one being better than others but that one language has been accepted (Swan 2005, p. 288). As in the case of the U-Group, the customer desires an SAE, and it is that variety of English that the business provides. Thus, businesses, ESL academies, academic environments, and governments can decide which variety of English works best for their purposes. If for local communication, the local variety would suffice. However, if for communication outside of the local environment, a standard form or better, an agreed-upon form would be more practical. Swan (2005, p. xx) sums it up well by expressing, “Dialect forms are not, therefore, incorrect in themselves. They are, however, out of place in styles where only the standard language is normally used.”

This research shows conflicting results with Floris’ (2014, p. 221) comments, “...in many cases, the language acquires distinct local characteristics, while still retaining the main grammatical structures of the ‘original.’” As such, a new English is used among the U-Group members that conflicts with the SAE they are required to teach. This may or may not be the result of “limited linguistic competence” as Hamid, Zhu, and Baldauf (2014, p. 78) point out. Within their own speech community, the English variety works, but what about outside the community?

So, “How can we distinguish between errors in the SLA sense and varietal features in the WE sense” (Hamid, Zhu, & Baldauf, 2014, p. 78).

World Englishes are used within the culture. If it works for the people of that culture than it is accepted (Smith, 1992, p. 75 cited in World Englishes, n.d., p. 35). If, someone from a different variety of English entered the cultural domain using their own variety of English, as we can see from the example given in this research, there would be the potential for misunderstandings and miscommunication. Therefore, to enter the speech community, one would find it much more expeditious to learn the differences between English A and English B. I therefore find it obvious and am rather unclear why until now so much has been written on this particular topic of accepting the variety of English from each speech culture. It just makes sense! Nevertheless, the question that repeatedly arises is how will a single variety of English work in cross-cultural communications, the idea behind this research.

Hamid, Zhu, and Baldauf (2014), had a commendable research method of asking TESOL teachers to evaluate grammar and lexis deviations from SE as acceptable or not in terms of the need for error correction (Swan, 2005, p. xx). In fact, the very premise behind their research required the utilization of a standard form of English in order to conduct the research (Hamid, Zhu, & Baldauf, 2014, Abstract). However, in the area of WEs and cross-cultural communication the point is missed: within the WE culture only the speech community members are qualified to determine correct or incorrect usage. But, how about outside? Among the U-Group members, where past and present conflict with SAE, will it be perfectly understandable in cross-cultural settings? How far would it play out? For example, is she taking medicine, has she taken medicine, or does she take medicine?

Here is where Swan (2005, p. ix) makes an important distinction in writing that "[i]f someone makes too many mistakes in a foreign language, he or she can be difficult to understand, so a reasonable level of correctness is important" (Swan 2005, p. ix). Using English within an English speech community ought not to be an "anything goes" approach, as (DeCarrico 2000, p. xx) points out since "certain forms are viewed as uneducated or perhaps even vulgar." Jung (2010, Abstract) suggests that English learners learn "common varieties of English used between native speakers and non-native speakers (NSs-NNSs) and between two non-native speakers (NNSs-NNSs)." However, this suggestion may come across as a lot of work for people who simply want to function within a global community and is in conflict with Sykes (2015, p. 34) who suggests that "Whilst autonomy in setting standards and norms is important for the development of World Englishes, for English to be an international language there must be certain standards and norms common to all of its varieties and acceptable to all its users." Swan (2005, p. 290) also supports this thinking by suggesting, "For most learners, the best model is one or other of the two main standard varieties: British or American English... they are both used and understood worldwide. "Swan's point is evidenced in the common use of standardized English tests such as the IELTS, the TOEIC, TOEFL, OPI, and the like that use a standard form of English (usually British or American English) is used to "determine if a non-native

speaker is capable of functioning or surviving in the English-speaking culture they desire to function in” (Smith, 2016, p. 47). A study conducted by Young & Walsh (2010, p. 128) also exemplifies the idea that there is in some form a need for cross-cultural English. As a matter of fact, their study would not have been possible without standardization. Tweedie and De Almeida (n.d., p. 1) support this idea by writing:

Just because speakers of World Englishes are speaking the same language does not make them mutually intelligible. Obviously, if the speakers are from different circles, e.g. a Kiwi and a Turk, then the likelihood of successful communication is not guaranteed. Even speakers from the same circle, e.g. an American and an Australian, can have difficulty understanding each other due to the influence of the verbal, non-verbal and para-verbal components of communication.

### ***Arguments that promote varieties of English tend to miss the point***

Often, the point appears to have been missed among the numerous papers that I have examined, that being, as previously stated and repeated: within the WE culture, it is fine to communicate with a localized variant of English. But, how about outside? Given the assumption that many language learners are learning English in order to function in or interact with specific English-speaking cultures (Smith, 2016, p. 47), would they be able to by using their own variety of English? Can one speaker use a verb from their English instead of using it as a noun common in SAE for example (Smith, 2016, p. 49) and be understood?

The concern is not related to the political aspect of the English language which some these days seem to be focusing on (Essossomo, 2015, p. 95, Floris, 2014, p. 221, Gray, 2003, p. 3, Pickering, 2006, p. 1, Wehbe, n.d., p. 1, World Englishes, n.d., p. 27), where English is viewed as a political, rather than communicative tool from the direction of some authors. Using the example from the U-Group, how could someone from an SAE community know with certainty that she’s refers to she is rather than she was without more effort to determine the meaning of the comment made by the U-Group member? We could turn it around to say the same for an SAE member communicating to a U-Group member. Could one’s words be taken at face value if members are communicating in English cross-culturally? Worse yet, would one speaker assume that the other means the same until perhaps an undesirable circumstance arises due to the lack of understanding? Sykes (2015, p. 43) I believe, has an amicable solution to the political aspect of WEs:

This awareness would give users of English the opportunity to make their own choices as to which English they use dependent upon their specific communicative needs. In this way, users of English could take pride in, and enjoy the diversity of, the language found in World

Englishes, while taking advantage of the unity of the language found in English as an International Language.

## **Conclusion**

This study was not meant as a criticism of one English in favor of another. Neither was this a search for perfect English, nor a suggestion that SAE speakers are perfect. Indeed, there is no perfect English among SAE speakers. However, it does shed light on the potential for misunderstandings between World Englishes and English varieties/dialects such as British English or American English in cross-communication settings. It has been reasonably demonstrated that there are indeed inconsistencies between varieties of Englishes that would, could, and do, lead to miscommunication or misunderstandings in a cross-cultural setting. It would be a stretch to say that an entire culture of English (i.e. World English) is represented by this sample of U-Group members. However, given the demographics, the representatives do present a limited range of intracultural English. Therefore, when we examine the common areas for potential miscommunication, one could argue that this is widespread throughout the Filipino culture. Of course, it makes sense for any culture to shape English to suit its needs within the context of their own culture. A separate question arises however as to why that might be necessary in a culture where English is not the mother tongue. The purpose of English as a global language is to communicate with entities outside of the culture. Once one goes outside of these English subcultures into cross-cultural communication, and in this case, teaching English language, there appears to be potential for confusion between interlocutors.

At what point will we lose understanding between English varieties? Shall we lose tense to avoid difficulties? Shall we use verbs as nouns to accommodate? Shall we remove /th/ because it is difficult? Where will it end? The point of English as a global language is to communicate more readily between non-English and L1 speaking cultures. How much energy does one want to exert to understand another person? In the efforts of being more sensitive to other cultures' Englishes, are we not shooting ourselves in the foot so to speak? I know my opinions and observations are not popular in today's EIL environment of being politically correct, but if we would use English as a tool for communication, wouldn't it make sense to have the right tool for the job in cross-cultural settings?

Finally, in an even greater sense, this study might become one piece of the puzzle to answer my own question: Does the phenomenon of World Englishes in cross-cultural settings actually promote enhanced communication between cultures or do these varieties of English engender confusion? It is my desire that this paper will be a step toward answering that question. Future researches could present cross-variety differences to a separate community of English users to determine their understanding of specific statements to in fact support or falsify my assumptions. Admittedly, this has been a crude

presentation of an immediate but potentially foreseeable concern.

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