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## Foreword

Welcome to the December 2020 issue of the Journal of English as an International Language!

This issue is yet another reiteration of EILJ's unflagging commitment to nurturing a plurality of research issues and interests that underpin our pedagogies and practices in the teaching of EIL. The papers presented in this issue signpost our authors' bold attempts to propose and disseminate conceptualizations/routes of realization that are in keeping with EILJ's declared mission of promoting locally appropriate, culturally sensitive and socially aligned methodologies and materials in EIL. It is our fond belief that such on-going endeavours and exercises would add particular momentum to EILJ's democratization and dehegemonization of the use of English across the cultures of Asia and farther afield.

The paper entitled, "Rhetorics in/of English Language Education in India: A Case of Digital Natives in Higher Education Programs", jointly authored by Arya Parakkate Vijayaraghavan and Dishari Chattaraj sets the tenor and tone for this issue. It presents an incisive account of the current state of English language in the new education policy of India as a forerunner to discussing the pedagogical perils that exist in the policy-practice gaps. In light of this, the General English (GE) courses offered at undergraduate level in a Southern Indian university assume particular centrality, immediacy and primacy to the paper. By the same token, the paper speaks to the pedagogical benefits of including rhetorical practices in GE courses at undergraduate levels in various universities in urban India. The authors use a broad-brush approach to uncover and analyze an engaging array of policy issues, the dynamics and fallouts of teaching situations, the ever-complexifying nature of curriculum and materials development seen in conjunction with issues of quality audit. With a view to providing empirical support to their premise, the authors use a survey questionnaire with a large size student population. The authors strongly believe that the accruing students' voice discerned in the survey can attest to the efficacy of the structure, administration and evaluation practices of this new GE course predicated on rhetorical practices. Signposting their robust understanding of relevant critical perspectives and theoretical insights, the authors examine and exemplify a host of pedagogical as well as procedural implications in the paper with the express purpose of fostering a discourse of current reckoning around/about the mode and ecosphere in which English language education and teaching is envisioned, formulated and implemented in undergraduate programs across urban universities in India. Given the digital

natives' declining reading/writing culture and their alarming atrophy of critical thinking, the authors believe that a timely pedagogical inclusion of rhetorical practices in the GE can help inoculate their digital natives against a pandemic of categorical stupidity and illiteracy. More importantly a revival of reading and writing culture in Indian university settings engendered via the prevalence of rhetorical practice-centered GE is vital to safeguarding India's socio-political, socio-economic as well socio-educational well-being in its vibrant multilingual and multicultural geographies.

Mohammad Amin Mozaheb and Abbas Monfared's joint paper entitled: "Exonormativity, Endonormativity or Multilingualism: Teachers Attitudes towards Pronunciation Issues in Three Kachruian Circles", investigates the problematic as well as politically sensitive teachers' attitudes towards English pronunciation pedagogy in ELT classes. Drawing on the theoretical insights and issues of Kachruian Circles (1986, 1992) and Jenkins' (2003) "international phonological intelligibility", the authors direct our attention to the developing picture of EIL pronunciation and the evaluative reactions of Inner, Outer and Expanding Circle teachers towards their own English in our current globalized world. They administered a questionnaire predicated on a six-point evaluative scale to 352 English teachers from the three Kachruian Circles and interviewed 15 Native English teachers, 15 Indian and Malaysian teachers and 15 Iranian and Turkish teachers who had previously answered the questionnaires and had volunteered for the interviews. Based on the findings accruing from their methodological interventions, the authors note that while their Expanding Circle participants displayed an exonormative orientation towards English along with a preference for native American English pronunciation, the Outer Circle teachers displayed an endonormative orientation along with a preference for British English as the best linguistic model, in spite of their positive attitude towards their own local variety. In light of this, the authors feel that the Outer Circle teachers' fixation for native speaker norms can be challenged by educating and raising awareness of teachers and policy-makers towards EIL pronunciation in the globalized world. By the same token, they believe that EIL users should be made to understand and appreciate notions such as language innovation, varying linguistic and pragmatic norms, negotiation strategies, and social sensitivity in language use. Such a position can significantly strengthen an orientation of comprehensibility and mutual understanding in keeping with EIL's "international phonological intelligibility" rather than an obsession with the native speaker norms of pronunciation. Given this, the paper should offer tremendous stimuli and synergies to our readership, who are very often confronted with the issue of native speaker fallacy in their respective

ecospheres of teaching English pronunciation. More importantly, our readership could also investigate how cultural differences mediate in the delivery of EIL programmes in the various cultures of the Outer Circles and Expanding Circles.

The paper entitled, “A Case Study of Constructivist Learning and Intercultural Communicative Competence in English-majoring Pre-Service Teachers”, by Ngoc Tung Vu makes a strong persuasion for a sustained implementation of constructivist learning practices with a view to maximizing Vietnamese EFL teachers’ intercultural communicative competence (ICC). The study, which is seen as a semi-longitudinal project couched in a teacher education programme at a university in Northern Vietnam, charts the dynamics and fall-outs of an inquiry focused on the use of three data forms: learning journals, class observations, and semi-structured interviews. Drawing on the strengths of the theoretical positions underpinning the study, the author speaks to the opportunities and potential challenges regarding the integration of constructivist learning for teaching career preparation at the chosen setting. In light of this, he believes that an informed and well mediated exposure to the key issues of ICC along with its translatability and bidirectionality to constructivist teaching practices can eminently equip the Vietnamese EFL teachers with the sociolinguistic sensitivities and sensibilities that they would need in handling future EFL classrooms which are going to be inevitably heterogeneous rather than homogeneous. The findings presented in the paper chime in well with these belief systems of the author. Further to this, the author notes that the themes emerging from the study along with its noticeable congruencies can serve as a point of departure to challenge the theoretical limitations/assumptions of Byram’s (1997) ICC frame work which is predicated on the binary of “selves and others”. By the same token, the author urges his readership to re-binarize the blended landscape of ICC and constructivist learning practices as an open dialogue in which “we and us” will replace “selves and others”. The pedagogical and procedural implications accruing from such an act of realization can provide food and pause for thought thereby synergizing EILJ’s mission focused on the prevalence and promotion of a heterogenous global English speech community and heterogenous modes of competence.

The paper entitled, “The Pragmatics of Articles in Outer Circle Englishes: Some Theoretical and Pedagogical Considerations”, by Ridwan Wahid examines the dynamics and fallouts of the variations that occur in the usage of definite and indefinite articles across different varieties of English, especially in the Outer Circle. Referring to the problematic nature of defining



definiteness, the author raises questions regarding its uniqueness, familiarity, inclusiveness and identifiability, when seen as semantic or pragmatic category. Well appraised of the complications that might arise in the absence of an agreed/informed definition that can help characterize markers of definiteness and indefiniteness, the author uses the semantic/pragmatic theory of definiteness proposed by Chesterman (1995, 2005) to deal with the pragmatic meanings that might arise if definiteness is seen as a semantic composite of locatability, inclusiveness and exclusivity. While he believes that such an exercise can help explain the patterns of variation seen in Outer Circle varieties of English, the differing semantic/pragmatic system of articles used by speakers of these varieties can express the kind of systematic meanings which are in keeping with the Gricean principles. With a view to deducing pedagogical implications for classroom teaching engagement, the author used data constituting of Outer Circle varieties represented by Indian English, Singapore English, Philippine English and Kenyan English from the International Corpus of English (ICE) (see [www.ice-corpora.net/ice/index.html](http://www.ice-corpora.net/ice/index.html)). Notwithstanding that each corpus contains 1 million words – 600,000 spoken and 400,000 written – and consists of 12 text types or registers, the analysis in this study was based on only three categories: private dialogue, academic writing and reportage. The author used two definiteness-based annotation schemes from his earlier study of 2013 to analyze a total of 6,950 NPs, of which 2,152 NPs contain a/an. Based on this, he examines several of the usage variation patterns found in the Outer Circle data with reference to the Gricean cooperative principle and its attendant conventional and conversational implicature. Needless to say, that untypical usages of articles in the Outer Circle point to a kind of deviation from how definiteness is marked in the Inner Circle varieties of English, the author believes that the analysis used in his paper, can confirm that the speakers of Outer Circle varieties are capable of constructing a semantic/pragmatic system of articles that can differ from that of their Inner Circle counterparts. He then urges the ESL teachers to utilize the knowledge gained from this understanding to teach how articles are used in the Inner Circle and how they may appear to deviate from the established usage patterns when they are used in the Outer Circle by attempting inter-circle and intra-circle comparisons. In sum and spirit, the paper upholds EILJ's declared belief that the English used by the Outer Circle speakers can fulfill itself as a communication tool as it is reasonably organized for meaning.

The paper entitled, "Challenges and Importance of Teaching English as a Medium of Instruction in Thailand International College", by Keow Ngang Tang signposts the challenges of teaching English as a medium of instruction

(EMI) and its impact on the institutional setting of Thailand International College. The increasing currency of EMI is an index of its rising popularity in some countries of the Far East and South East Asia, especially Thailand, where its prevalence poses a number of policy as well as pedagogical issues for the lecturers and students who enroll into their chosen major programmes of study delivered via EMI. Against this backdrop, the author examines a host of issues and insights that assume particular centrality and immediacy in regard to the implementation of EMI. She uses a qualitative design predicated on focus group interviews to identify and illustrate the challenges faced by the lecturers teaching via EMI in her college. The findings of her study identify four categories of principal challenges in regard to the implementation of EMI. They are cultural, structural, and identity-related (institutional) challenges which underly four important aspects of EMI implementation, namely, importance for language improvement, subject matter learning, career prospects, and internationalization strategy. Anchoring the mainstay of her investigation in Spolsky's (2004) Language Policy Framework, the author visits a select number of studies done on the implementation of EMI in China, Japan and the Netherlands to bring in a sense of informed understanding of "the how and why" of EMI in her Thai contextual setting. While the author's discussion of findings serves well to answer the proposed research questions of her study, the accruing confirmatory support can serve as a basis to both identify and understand a number of positive implications for EMI along with its drawbacks, all of which should be seen in conjunction with the linguistic and sociolinguistic dimensions of the Thai culture. Given the participants' similar responses both in regard to the positives and negatives of EMI, the author believes that EMI in her Thai cultural setting can yield a double dividend, which will bring about a beneficial internationalization and the promise of improved ranking with it for raising her institution's local and global standing. Such a realization then should help mitigate against a deficit modeling of EMI that is characteristic of native speaker bias by assuaging the negatives of EMI with its positives.

Karolin Candan and Dilek Inal's joint paper, "EFL Learners' Perceptions on Different Accents of English and (Non)Native English-Speaking Teachers in Pronunciation Teaching: A Case Study Through the Lens of English as an International Language", addresses attitudes towards different accents and pronunciations in a Turkish EIL setting. Pointing to the paucity of research on attitudes to English accents and pronunciations in Turkish EIL settings, the authors present their paper as a scholarly exercise predicated on Turkish university preparatory school students' perceptions of different English pronunciations and accents as well as the English pronunciation of native and

non-native speakers and teachers. Drawing on their informed grasp of literature on attitudes towards different pronunciation and accents, the authors used online surveys and focus group interviews as mainstay of their methodology. The authors noted remarkable congruencies emerging between the data gathered via the survey and the interview responses from student participants. A majority of the participants believed that while correct pronunciation was crucial in communication, as long as the pronunciation was intelligible it could be accepted as “good”. Furthermore, while the participants acknowledged the positive effect of native English-speaking teachers (NESTs) on their pronunciation, most of them did not ignore the positive influence of non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs) on their pronunciation improvement contrary to anticipated students’ bias for and against accents and pronunciations. In light of this, the authors believe that EIL teachers should not restrict themselves only to British and American pronunciation models, but should expose their students to more pronunciation models and varieties of English the World Englishes( WE) framework so that their students will become receptive and sensitive enough to accept, compare, and analyze different varieties of English, which will help them improve their intelligibility thereby increasing their communicative flexibility and respect for accent diversity (Scales et al., 2006). It is our fond hope that the study featured in this paper will serve as an inspiration to practitioners of EIL who are committed to optimizing their learners’ awareness of other English accents and pronunciations.

Arpita Goswami’s paper entitled, “Changing Contours: The Interference of the Mother Tongue on English Speaking Sylheti Bengali”, examines the phonological differences between Sylheti Bangla (henceforth, SHB) vis-a-vis that of standard English pronunciation (RP) and the attendant issues of intelligibility that accrue out of it. Alluding quite unreservedly to the sociocultural sensibilities prevalent in business, entertainment, arts, advertising and politics, the author reckons that the emergence of various kinds of English in many of the geographical regions of India are unavoidable linguistic occurrences. By the same token, the author believes that it then becomes a theoretical imperative for her to untangle one such variant of English i.e. Sylheti English, used by speakers of Sylheti, a dialect of Bangla language (SHB) which is primarily spoken in the Sylhet District of Bangladesh, Barak Valley of Assam and North Tripura of North Eastern India. In light of this, the paper makes allusive use of a considerable quantum of issues and insights that constitute the notions of interference and transfer in L2 phonology. It also draws on the affinitive and affiliable aspects of Contrastive Analysis (CA), as its methodological mainstay in order to

examine some basic phonological aspects of SHB such as segments, syllable, stress, and intonation and evaluate the interference of mother tongue in Sylheti learners of English. As result, the findings obtained help in the construction of a contrastive picture of SHB and English phonology to understand how the differences create hindrances in the way of SHB speakers' learning of English correctly. The very same process, the author believes, highlights the causes behind the systematic errors committed by SHB speakers. From the analysis of English data spoken by SHB speakers, it becomes verifiably confirmable that while learning English the properties of SHB phonology did interfere with the phonology of English and that this interference accounts largely, if not wholly for the many errors that SHB speakers committed in their spoken English. Notwithstanding the efficacious presence and role of CA-centric methodology in her study, the author believes that it will help us propose an empirical profile of the Interlanguage (i.e. IL) phonology of Sylheti English (henceforth, SHE), a variety of English spoken by Sylheti speakers. Such an outcome is well placed to help them moderate as well as mitigate the problems arising out of the gap between Sylheti English and English (RP). Given this, the author feels that her paper has unfolded theoretical dimensions that can expand on the theory of second language acquisition with a particular focus on learning English by the SHB speakers. In sum and spirit, this paper has opened up a considerable number of "theoretical in-betweenisms" which can translate into agendas for further research on EIL mediated and moderated interlanguage phonologies.

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 attempted 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**

# **Rhetorics in/of English Language Education in India: A Case of Digital Natives in Higher Education Programs**

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## **Abstract**

The study briefly analyzes the ELT situation in India which is replete with challenges emerging from the lack of engagement with the phenomenon of digitality that further shapes the existing nature of learning and the needs of the learner. After locating the position of English Language in the new education policy of India, the paper discusses the General English (GE) courses offered at undergraduate level at the city of Bangalore in India, thereby shedding light on the existing gaps between policy and practice. It is based on this conjecture that the paper suggests the possibility of introducing rhetorical practices in GE courses at undergraduate levels in various institutions in urban India. In order to substantiate this suggestion, the results of a survey conducted with the learners (N=359) of a GE course based on rhetorics at a Southern Indian university is provided. Empirical data along with a brief reflection on the learners' voices are used in the study to examine the efficacy of the structure, administration and evaluation practices of this new course. The study thus opens up possibilities of initiating a discourse around the mode in which English language education and teaching is envisioned, formulated and implemented in undergraduate programs across urban India.

**Keywords:** Critical Skills, Digitalization, EAP, ELE, ELT, English in India, General English.

## **Introduction**

The principal thrust of curriculum and pedagogy reform across all stages will be to move the education system towards real understanding and towards learning how to learn – and away from the culture of rote learning as is largely present today.... All aspects of curriculum and pedagogy will be reoriented and revamped to attain these critical goals.

(National Education Policy, 2020, p. 12)

The National Education Policy of India unequivocally articulates the shift in paradigm in alignment with the changing needs, challenges and

concerns arising from digitality and its impact on society. In an era where information is widely available (Darvin, 2016), there is a requirement to deliberate on how the changing time impacts the nature of learning, learner and accordingly the nature of the curriculum and pedagogy. This change is not just restricted to “professional courses” which are essentially understood as imparting domain-specific skills (Unni, 2016), but also to other courses, especially Ability Enhancement Courses (AEC). Further, the Choice Based Credit System (CBCS) implemented in 2013 by the *Rashtriya Uchchattar Siksha Abhiyan* (RUSA) policy recognizes language courses as an intrinsic part of AEC in all undergraduate programs. Given the multilingual nature of the country, the English language becomes the apparent choice for most educational institutions. Therefore, it is imperative to address the efficacy of English language courses offered to the contemporary learners. Often, an ELT course in India is referred to as General English (GE) or are titled “Communicative English”, “Functional English”, and “Optional English” (Mohan & Banerji, 1985 as cited in Tasildar, 2019). These GE courses which have been incessantly repetitive than progressive were often designed to cater to the English Language needs through an emphasis on the lowest level of competence like memorization and retention (Gupta, 1995). As a result, there is a clear disjunction between the needs of the learners, the nature of learning and the GE Course offered. In order to mitigate this gap and address the persisting challenges that the urban digital natives confront, the paper discusses the scope of introducing a new GE course and the pedagogical conceptualization and apparatus required for the administration. Further, the perceptions of the learners are also taken into account and discussions are made around the challenges and limitations of this new course in the context of the contemporary education system.

## **Literature Review**

### ***English language education in India***

The institutionalization of the English language began with the English Education Act that deliberated on the necessity of English Language Education (ELE) for Indian society. A reflection of this discussion can be traced back to Macaulay’s *Minutes on Education in India* published in 1835. Scholars have widely critiqued and engaged with the discursive spaces from which such a policy originated (Evans, 2002; Whitehead, 2005). These scholarships, located within the postcolonial framework, raise concerns regarding the colonial legacy and ideological motivation behind the implementation of ELE (Viswanathan, 2014). Often associated with the agendas of anglicization and evangelization, English language thereby is perceived by the academics and civilians alike as a master’s tool and a non-native tongue (Luhar & Choudhary, 2017). In contradiction to this narrative, Macaulay’s association of ELE with scientific knowledge (Evans, 2002) found

its advocates in prominent figures like Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Rajunath Hari Navalkar (Mahanta & Sharma, 2019). The advocacy for the implementation of ELE was primarily based on the need for inculcation of scientific fervour among the youth and the practical utility of the education within the Indian context (Chauhan, 2004). The aspect of practical utility allowed English language to percolate into the socio-cultural scenario of India for multiple purposes, and thereby gain further acceptability and legitimacy among the people. The observations made by Mahanta and Sharma (2019) on the limitation of engaging with ELE within the purview of ideological motivation is particularly relevant here. According to them, the usage of the language for purposes like governance, cultural interactions, industrial and scientific discourses, resulted in the need to examine the language beyond its colonial legacy. Thus, the process of transition in perspective towards English language, emerged with the focus on the functionality of the language and the requirement of English within the context of India.

The change in perspective towards English language in general and ELE in particular, also paved the way for the discussions on the nativization of the language (Kachru, 1982, 1983). The notion of nativization is further developed by Kumaravadivelu (2003) who argues on the need to decenter the western hegemony by proposing to bring the peripheral methods of teaching to the center. However, his view on the idea of English as an “additional language”, as “language of communicational necessity than a symbol of cultural identity” (p. 541) can be contested. Multiple studies (Allen, 1854; Azam, Chin, & Prakash, 2013; Gupta, 1995; Roy, 1993) point out that the history of ELE is also informed by the social and economic aspirations of the emerging middle class and the urban elite, which invariably shapes their caste, class, and cultural identity. Connected with this notion of upward mobility and employability, therefore an increasing desire for English language learning and acquisition could be observed in India (Gupta, 1995).

Further to the above stated points, the emergence of India as the world’s second-largest English-speaking country (Masani, 2012) with 2,59,678 Indians reportedly speaking English as a Mother Tongue and more than 83 million people using it as second language (Census of India, 2011) indicates that the number of English speakers in India have risen exponentially (Costa, 2019). This ever-increasing number of speakers of English thus opens up possibilities to discuss how this growing competence in English could be channelized in the domain of curriculum and pedagogy. English Language Teaching (ELT) in India has been fraught with a lack of direction and most often courses in English have been intrinsically repetitive and circular in nature than sequential and progressive, designed to cater to those at the lowest level of competence (Gupta, 1995). Though there have been shifts, from a heavily-literature oriented to communication-oriented courses (Gupta, 2004), attempts towards a possible gradation of syllabus have hardly been made. Coupled with this conflict, the emergence of digitalization has further complicated the context of ELT in urban India.

### *Negotiating digitality in language education*

The plausibility of the education system in India to be informed and shaped by the process of digitization is immense. The *National Convention on Digital Initiative for Higher Education* (2017), organized by the University Grants Commission (UGC), extensively discussed some of the impacts of the digital revolution in higher education. While the possibilities offered by this digital way of educational excellence is promising, there is a lack of discussion and focus around the changing nature and the needs of the learners (Almudibry, 2018). The digital natives, who are the nucleus of the current education system, are accustomed to a peculiar environment, which is defined by digitalization. Familiarity to “twitch-speed, multitasking, random-access, graphics-first, active, connected, fun, fantasy, quick-payoff world of their video games, MTV, and Internet” results in this generation getting “bored by most of today’s education, however well-meaning as it may be” (Prensky, 2001, p. 5). One of the dominant characteristics of this generation is their inability to retain interest in a specific area of study, which primarily originates from the accessibility to a plethora of information available in bits and pieces. Mohr and Mohr (2017) point out that the focus of the contemporary education system therefore should be to guide the digital natives to sift, synthesize, and evaluate information rather than to provide information that is already available. This changing nature of the learner and learning process thus will have an undeniable impact on the current education system.

The study by Seaboyer and Barnett (2019) on the characterization of reading habits of the digital natives is insightful to comprehend the impacts of changing nature of learners on the reading process and thereby on ELT and curriculum designing. It is pointed out that “deep reading” which is critical, ethical, creative, difficult, and enjoyable, is intrinsic to the disciplines in humanities and is only attempted by the learners during exam deadlines, especially under pressure. Most of the digital natives are efficient scanners, especially due to their constant interaction with the screen. Neuroscientist Wolf (2018) argues for the implementation of “bi-literacy” to overcome this challenge of lack of critical deep-reading posed by digital natives. “Bi-literacy” is a process in which learners are trained to shift between their habitual activities of reading for information in bits and pieces from multiple sources to involving in a more time-consuming cognitive process of deep-reading based on contexts and needs. Such a process of training, therefore, is relevant in the contemporary situation, if the education system aims to produce informed learners by inculcating in them a culture of deep critical reading along with that of “eye-byte culture” (Rosenwald, 2014). Also, important to note here is that if this eye-byte culture is the inherent way in which current learners engage with the reading and learning process, then it also has a larger implication on the hierarchical model of learning put forward by Bloom (1956). The traditional method of feeding information and



excessive emphasis on memory and retention skills is increasingly becoming insignificant as digital natives can easily access information (Tapscott, 2008). An explorable approach that can be recommended for the contemporary education systems is to design courses that would enable the learner to analyze and critically evaluate information thereby meaningfully interact and navigate through them (Kivunja, 2014).

The global education scenario is replete with multiple narratives to confront the challenges arising out of digitalization (Kelly, McCain, & Jukes, 2008; Mishra & Koehler, 2006; Prensky, 2001). However, such deliberations have hardly been the focal point for the Indian higher education system. An apparent reason for this is probably the fact that digitalization is primarily an urban phenomenon in India, and 70% of the workforce resides in rural areas (Chand, Srivastava, & Singh, 2017). It is imperative to mention here that this argument is made not to overlook initiatives like the *Digital India* campaign, which also emphasizes on the need to explore ICT-enabled learning (NMEICT, 2019). Rather, the idea is to point out that digitalization and the discourse surrounding digital learning is still at its nascent stage in India. The discourses around accessibility to digital resources related to the urban-rural divide in learners and education system find significance, while the mode in which digitization impacts the learners hardly finds any mention in the popular discourses (Indian Today Web Desk, 2019), such a scenario is troubling as the learners in urban India are highly impacted by digitization. However, the curriculum and pedagogy hardly take the needs of the learners and changing nature of learning into consideration, an observation often made by ICT researchers and theorists across the world (Kivunja, 2014).

### ***The Case of General English courses***

The curriculum and the pedagogy adopted for General English (GE) courses across various private institutions in Bangalore further reiterates the argument made about the challenges of the contemporary education system in India. GE courses have often not evolved with the changing needs and nature of the learning and the learners. GE courses offered at the undergraduate (UG) level for degree courses in humanities and social sciences are based historically on the trends and purposes adopted by ELT in India (Tasildar, 2019). Some of the titles of the course offered across various institutes at Bangalore in India are *English and Communicative Skills*, *General English*, and *Additional English* which runs across either for two or four semesters. Based on the nomenclature, syllabus, and course objective, these courses can be categorized in terms of different existing approaches to ELT.

Literature-oriented English courses depend heavily on the literary text to impart specific skills (Mohan & Banerji, 1985 as cited in Tasildar, 2019). One of the main course objectives is to gain linguistic competence by familiarizing the learner with literatures in English (Sivasubramaniam, 2006). Though, there can be advantages of teaching literature-centric courses, here it

is conceived to be the primary mode through which LSRW skills are meant to be taught (Mekala, 2002). This approach emphasizes on memorization and retention of various literary works as a result of which the key skills of the 21st century i.e. critical reading and thinking skills (Buphate & Esteban, 2018) hardly get any focus. It is also important to note that though the syllabus claims to sensitize students to the concerns of society, clarity regarding contextualization to immediate socio-political context is often absent, like it has mostly been the case in literature-centric English language teaching in India (Marathe & Ramanan, 1993). English language courses with nomenclatures like *General English* and *Additional English* offered by various institutions in the city fit into this category of approach.

Another approach that dominates the curriculum and designing of syllabus is based on the utilitarian aspect of English language in Indian context (Gupta, 1995). This approach to ELT is congruent with the boom of the IT and BPO sector which resulted in the UGC promoting the administration of vocational courses in English language at the UG level (Tharu, 1998). Courses titled *Communicative English* and *Functional English* in the city very well fall within this category. These courses seek to improve LSRW skills of the learner through interactive methods like role-play, group discussion, phonetic practices (Shinde, 2009). It is needless to point out that this approach to ELT remains relevant in India considering the popularity of certificate courses on English language proficiency among the population (English Language Training Market India, 2012). However, the changing nature of employability brought upon by the digital disruption (Warschauer, 2000), coupled with the increasing number of English speakers in the country, raise doubts regarding the effectiveness of this approach for the urban digital natives.

Approaches to ELT across the world have evolved with changing time and space. A direction that seems insightful to the present study is to explore the practices of teaching composition in the educational institutions across the world. The ability to compose and write concisely is historically understood as a skill that goes beyond the knowledge of correct grammatical structures to the awareness of acceptable English rhetorics (Taylor, 1976). Numerous approaches have been designed to enable skills of composition in native speakers of the language (Donovan & McClelland, 1980). However, due to the growing number of ESL learners in the native English-speaking countries, especially the US, there has been a shift towards designing courses to meet the academic requisites of the US academia as well as the needs of the ESL learners (Kubota & Lehner, 2004). So far, there have been numerous studies that explore the effectiveness of the teaching composition in ESL classrooms (Freedman & Medway, 2003; Pally, 2001; Zamel, 1976). Xu and Li's (2018) study on teaching composition as a part of English for Academic Purposes (EAP) program in Chinese universities through the integration of process-genre approach (Badger & White, 2000) is particularly insightful and unique. Their observation on the intersection between reading, writing, and critical

skills, while administering a course specifically located in teaching composition for academic writing (Badger & White, 2000; Gupitasari, 2013) opens up new possibilities such an approach can offer when contextualized in different scenarios.

The study at hand, therefore, explores the possibilities offered by the introduction of a new GE course at the undergraduate level program at a university in the Southern Indian city of Bangalore. The new GE course, inspired by Shea, Scallon, and Aufses's (2013) work *The Language of Composition: Reading. Writing. Rhetoric*, is historically located within the practices of teaching composition. Though the course is inspired from the work situated in a western setting, it is informed by the nuances and debates of ELT in India. The attempt here is to approach ELT in a way that contextualizes and re-contextualizes the language for new speakers, new environments, different pasts, and different futures (Pakir, 1999). Thereby, the new GE course attempts to take into account the changing needs and nature of the urban digital learners for whom English language, like the digital world, is part of their everyday life.

### **Purpose of the study**

A nuanced understanding emerging from the analysis of the issues in contemporary ELT situations in India and abroad has informed the structuring of the present study. Initiated with an aim to identify an approach to ELT that would cater to the undergraduate learners across the disciplines of social sciences and humanities in the context of urban India, the study discusses a course that was designed by amalgamating effective steps identified in the literature for developing comprehension and critical language skills. The study not only provides a description of the new GE course but also contextualizes it within the dominant debates in the field of English Language Teaching and Learning. Further, by providing an empirical support to the new GE course in the form of survey responses from the learners, the present study opens up the possibilities of facilitating the present GE course across undergraduate institutions in urban India.

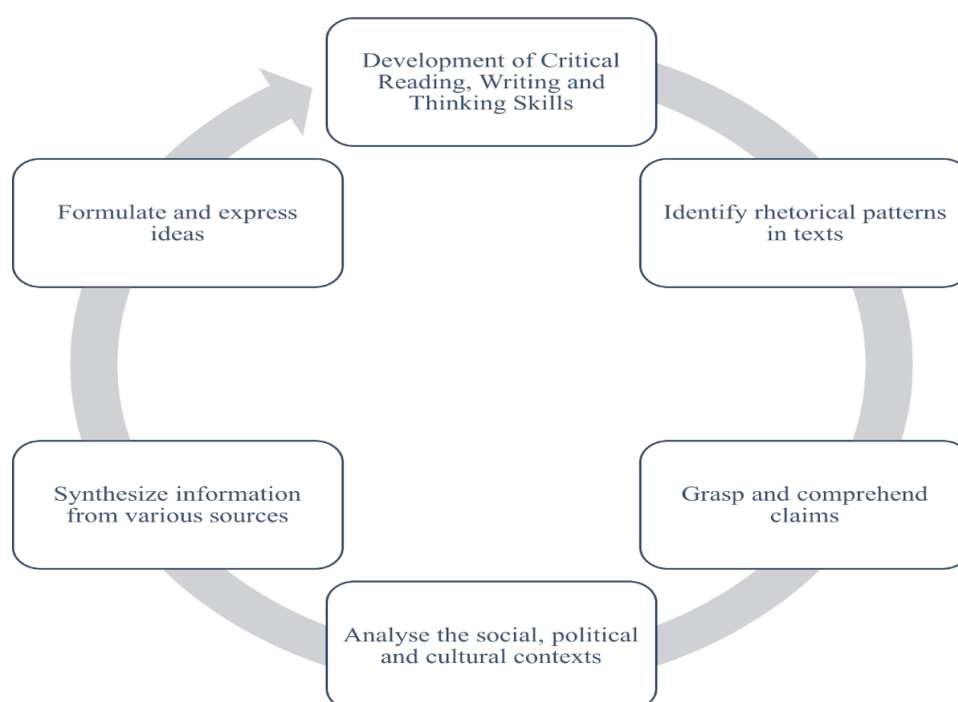
### **Description of the new course**

The new GE course replaced the literature-oriented approach to ELT that was followed for decades in the university. Inspired by Shea, Scallon, and Aufses's (2013) work, located in teaching composition, the course identifies rhetorics as a genre and thereby explores the rhetorical conventions of the English language to enable critical and compositional skills in the learners. The new GE course, while foregrounding rhetoric, is also informed by the notion of "New Rhetoric" propounded by Burke (1951). Therefore, the contextualization of the course for the needs of the time and digital natives is also informed by the postcolonial and postmodern debates on English

language hegemony (Luhar & Choudhary, 2017) and nativization (Kachru, 1982, 1983) that dominates the ELT situation in India. Further to counter the fixed understanding of conventions of rhetoric and the culture from which the course is inspired, the syllabus includes contents that are both relevant to local and global situations. While the notion of rhetorics as “arts of persuasion” continues as the core concept of the course, deliberations on politics of language from multiple identity positions are incorporated. The inclusion of both written and visual rhetorical compositions is informed by the postmodern framework that engages with language as a system of signs (Hawk, 2018). This opened up possibilities to include visual rhetorical compositions like cartoons, graphic narratives, advertisements, and enable the digital natives to critically engage with contents that are a significant part of their everyday interactions.

### ***Course structure***

This course, through a series of developmental processes across the two semesters, attempts to enable the learners achieve critical reading, writing, and thinking skills through the process enumerated in form of a flow chart (Figure 1). The model is developed by taking insights from the existing literature on critical language skills (Pally, 2001; Xu & Li, 2018).



*Figure 1.* Model for developing critical reading, writing, and thinking skills

While both the semesters closely follow the development process of critical engagement, individual semesters are designed with specific focus. The first semester is structured to focus on the instructor and learners' analysis of the rhetorical composition through different methods of reading. The focus on different reading methods aims to inculcate in the learners the practice of deep-reading along with scanning which they are mostly familiar with in the digital world (Rosenwald, 2014; Seaboyer & Barnett, 2019; Wolf, 2018). The different methods of reading and analysis is adopted to make the learners deliberate on the politics of production and consumption of rhetoric. This allows the learner to engage with the rhetoric through multiple perspectives thereby providing possibilities of grasping, understanding, evaluating the information available, by meaningfully and critically engaging with them. The second semester takes forward the learning acquired in the first semester by enabling learners to analyze and challenge rhetorics from their immediate spaces of engagement through an informed understanding of rhetoric. Rhetorical compositions from varied disciplines, genres, and themes are incorporated here to sustain interest of learners from various disciplinary backgrounds. This also enables the possibility to engage with compositions that are part of their everyday lives from varied areas, both global and local. Thus, the aim of the course is to enable critical reading, writing and thinking skills in the learners and thereby advance towards the channelization of the key skills of 21st century into the curriculum and pedagogy of GE in India. The curriculum also takes into account the nature of learning and needs of the learner and equips them not only to the requisites of academia but also that of the digital world.

### ***Assessment patterns***

The assessment pattern of the new course is designed to further support the goal of the new GE course and thereby initiate the employment of critical thinking and analytical skills. The assessment pattern of the university includes both formative internal assessments and summative assessments in the form of examinations. While formative internal assessments are flexible, allowing possibility for take-home creative assignments, summative assessments are essentially conventional time-bound exams. The assignments designed for the course closely follow the development process envisioned to enable critical thinking. Also, it complies with a gradational system wherein the learners employ critical skills to analyze texts and contexts and take the learning forward by indulging in the creation and production of rhetorics across varied genres, mediums, and contexts. However, designing assignments for summative assessments involve challenges posed by most of the time-bound examinations. In order to assess learners' abilities to apply the skills gained through the course, they are provided with rhetorical compositions and situations that are not directly introduced as part of classroom discussions or reading materials. Thus, the possibility of focusing solely on memory and

retention skills, like in the case of literature-oriented approach to GE course, is avoided. The question papers are structured to include components to assess skills of rhetoric analysis, close-reading, synthesizing information, and production of an effective rhetorical piece, which further support the objectives discussed.

## **Methodology**

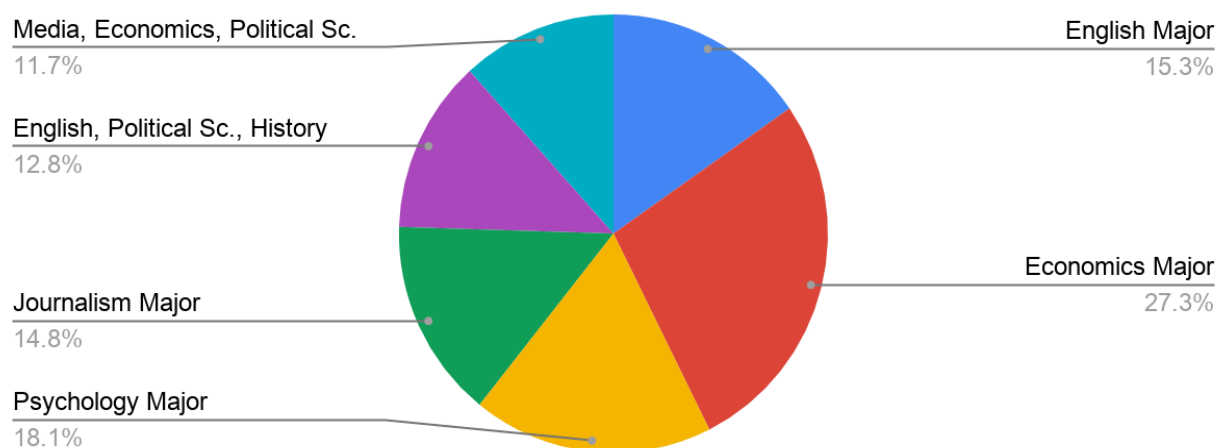
This study is primarily quantitative and cross-sectional in nature and the data were elicited in the form of a survey questionnaire by the practitioner-researchers at the end of the academic year in which this course was administered (2018-2019). The google-form was taken to the classes by the practitioner-researchers and the learners were made to respond to the same using their mobile phones. Information relating to the disciplinary specialization and gender orientation were elicited through the first few questions. The rest of the questionnaire comprised 13 questions (Appendix 1). Among these, the responses to the first 12 questions had to be given on a Likert-type scale of 1-5 ranging from *never* to *always* and the 13th question was open-ended where the students could make personal observations about the course. Among the 12 questions, three questions elicited responses on the nature and the relevance of the new course content. Two questions elicited responses on the effectiveness of the course in imparting LSRW skills and the mode in which these skills were facilitated. Responses to applicability and relatability in terms of pedagogical structuring of the course and content distribution were elicited through two questions. Three questions elicited responses on learners' perception of the role of instructor and method of instruction. And, two questions elicited responses on the learners' perception of the effectiveness of the modes and methods of assessment.

Only the students who had completed the course across both the semesters were considered for this study. Efforts were made to include a representative number of learners from across the humanities and social science disciplines in which this course was offered. Three hundred and fifty-nine (N=359) complete responses were collected from the learners.

Cronbach Alpha test was conducted to determine the reliability of the questionnaire. Further, T-tests and analysis of variance (ANOVA) tests were also conducted to analyze the impact of learner variables on the responses.

The questionnaire generated a high alpha value ( $\alpha=0.84$ ) thereby establishing that it was a highly reliable questionnaire. Statistical analysis was also conducted to analyze the impact of variables of gender and disciplinary specialization on the reception of the course. In terms of distribution of respondents across these variables, the number of learners who identified with female gender (N=248) were more than double of the number of learners who identified with the male gender (N=104) and the rest of the learners chose not to mention their gender (N=7). The distribution of learners in terms of gender actually implicates the general admission pattern of higher education in India

which sees a greater number of females joining non-professional courses than males (Sharma, 2018). The distribution of the learners across disciplines is presented in the form of a pie chart (Figure 2). See Appendix 2 for results of the study.



*Figure 2.* Disciplinary background of the learners

Three questions which elicited responses on the nature and relevance of the course content explored the learner's ability to produce and analyze rhetoric ( $M=3.74$ ,  $SD=0.96$ ), think and raise questions about the socio-cultural practices ( $M=3.57$ ,  $SD=1.10$ ), and, enquired whether rhetoric was perceived to be important in everyday life ( $M=3.72$ ,  $SD=1.07$ ), post completion of the course. These three questions were integral to analyze the learners' orientation towards a course that centered around rhetoric and its multiple engagements. The results indicate that the outcomes envisioned for the course were actualized in practice. The positive inclination displayed by the learners towards the course could be associated with the novelty involved in the nature of the course as it threads into less familiar terrain of rhetoric that has hardly been engaged in the context of ELT in India. The observation made by one of the learners majoring in Psychology about the course in the final open question not only substantiates the data further but also provides insights into skills acquired through the course. The student said, "I feel that an interest in the topics being discussed is crucial to understand and produce a rhetoric. This course focused on the nuances of reading, writing and convincing and the course in itself was a very effective rhetoric for trying to produce a rhetoric. Understanding the rhetoric elements helped gain insight into what to include in an essay, which was very helpful.". The learners' attempt to critically evaluate and analyze the rhetorics of the course reflects the awareness that rhetoric is an integral part of their everyday experiences and the meta-awareness of the need to consciously evaluate and critically analyze any information and content available. This consciousness developed among the

learners though may not be homogeneous but definitely represents that the course design initiated and encouraged the learners to engage in critical thinking at large. In order to probe further into learner variables, t-tests and ANOVA tests were conducted. While there were no statistically significant differences based on the gender of the learners, ANOVA test results revealed that there were statistically significant differences in the responses of the learners based on their disciplinary specializations ( $p < 0.05$ ). The learners with single-majors were more satisfied as compared to the ones with triple-majors. One of the possible explanations about the varying degree of interests towards the content and topics discussed might be because of the influence of disciplinary orientation.

The influence of disciplinary orientation is further explored through the following questions in the questionnaire. The response of a learner majoring in Economics is particularly relevant here; “This course is different from what have been taught to us before. I think this is more interesting than the normal poetry and novel reading as we become aware of real-life issues and problems.” Therefore, though the course may have limitation(s) in terms of catering to the interests of all learners, it was able to move away from the traditional literature-oriented ELT approach and generate interest among the learners by situating the content within the immediate context(s) of the learners. Thus, the negative results generated ( $M=2.97$ ,  $SD=1.18$ ) on the effectiveness of conventional materials and modes used for teaching English over the present course further substantiates the claim. Another question that needs to be deliberated in relation to the effectiveness of the course is the ability to impart LSRW skills. The responses to this question indicate that the learners did not associate the acquisition of basic LSRW skills with this course ( $M=3.23$ ,  $SD=1.02$ ). Overall, thus, the average response for both these questions were low ( $M=3.10$ ,  $SD=1.10$ ) and t-test and ANOVA test results indicating that there was no statistically significant impact of either gender or disciplinary variable on the responses. The low rating on the course’s effectiveness in imparting LSRW skills implies two aspects of the course. Firstly, the course is designed keeping in mind the advanced speakers of English language, considering the increasing number of speakers of English language in India (Census of India, 2011). Thus, an over-emphasis on listening and speaking skills, as is adopted in the approaches towards Communicative English oriented GE courses, is absent here. Secondly, the course situates the development process of critical thinking skills by exposing the learners to different methods of reading and writing, as mentioned in the description of the course, thereby enhancing their critical skills.

The section in the questionnaire on structuring and application of the methods generated mixed responses ( $M=3.43$ ,  $SD=0.87$ ). While the learners’ perception of the ability to apply methods of reading and analysis generated positive responses ( $M=3.58$ ,  $SD=1$ ), the response on smooth transition of the course from semester I to semester II was rated relatively low ( $M=3.27$ ,  $SD=1.06$ ). Though there was no significant impact of the variable of gender



on the responses, ANOVA test results showed that there existed statistically significant differences in responses among the discipline specific groups ( $p < 0.05$ ) with the Journalism and Psychology major students indicating a more positive orientation towards the transition. This concern on the transition of the course can also be observed in an open response, where a learner majoring in Psychology pointed out, “In semester 1, we focused more on the technicalities. But coming to semester 2 and having to read up a lot of extra and varied things was challenging. It is still difficult at times to connect all the dots i.e. the technical aspects of analysis and the much broader knowledge that we're expected to have. Maybe gradually introducing social, economic, political etc. material from the first semester itself would have definitely made the transition smoother.” While the course contextualizes the rhetorical compositions from the situation they emerged, the focus on compositions from across the world in the first semester to compositions from indigenous contexts in the second semester could be challenging for the learners. Therefore, there is a need to deliberate further on the structuring and transition of the course. Also, this indicates the important role played by the facilitator of the course in the smooth transition from semester I to II.

One of the challenges in administering the course at the university has been the change of the instructors every semester. This is further reiterated through the responses elicited on the importance of the role of an instructor ( $M=3.75$ ,  $SD=1.29$ ), method of teaching used by the instructor ( $M=3.44$ ,  $SD=1.31$ ), and the impact of change of instructors across the semesters on the course ( $M=3.96$ ,  $SD=1.22$ ). Though there was no impact of gender on the responses, ANOVA test result indicates that there was a statistically significant impact ( $p < 0.05$ ) of the disciplinary orientation on the way the role of the instructors was perceived. While learners specializing in English ( $M=4.04$ ,  $SD=0.98$ ), Economics ( $M=4.05$ ,  $SD=0.88$ ), Journalism ( $M=3.79$ ,  $SD=0.83$ ), and Psychology ( $M=3.72$ ,  $SD=0.52$ ) responded strongly towards the importance of instructor and method of instruction for this course, the same pattern of response was not noticed among the EPH ( $M=3.02$ ,  $SD=1.10$ ), and MEP ( $M=3.16$ ,  $SD=0.65$ ) students. The recorded high mean for two of the questions i.e. the role and the change of the instructor ( $M=3.75$ ,  $M=3.96$  respectively) indicates the general orientation of the learners towards a highly instructor-oriented approach, a phenomenon that is common in the Indian ELT context. And, for a course that is learner-oriented, such a scenario is challenging and less desirable. The argument here is not to completely evade the traditional patterns of teacher-oriented practices but rather to point out the need for a smooth integration of learner-oriented approaches to the ELT scenario by exploring the possibilities of training instructors and orienting learners. The recorded high standard deviation in this category further validates the argument made, as factors like preference for a particular instructor and teaching method strongly influence the perception of the course by the learners. The comparatively lower rating ( $M=3.44$ ) elicited on teaching methods is also echoed in the open response of a learner majoring in English,

“The course structure seems to be quite innovative, but the teaching methods do certainly effect its impact. A more coherent class discussion where an equal amount of both class participation and teacher guidance is present, would certainly be helpful.”. Therefore, there is a necessity to devise standardized teaching strategies and methods for the course. There is no denying the fact that facilitators of the course play a crucial role in enabling the learners with critical thinking skills. However, caution should be taken on the tendency of the learners to depend on the instructors, thereby mirroring the traditional teacher-oriented practices that focuses on enabling memory-retention skills. Thus, training sessions for the instructors are advisable in order to enable them to provide skills to the learners that would be transferable in nature.

Assessments are crucial to understand if the skills discussed and practiced have been acquired by the learners. Two questions elicited responses on learners’ perceptions of the effectiveness of assessment patterns employed. One inquired about summative assessment, that explored the possibility of the learners being challenged by not following traditional methods of testing memory and retention skills ( $M=3.19$ ,  $SD=1.15$ ). And, the other explored learners’ readiness towards new kinds of assessment patterns as adopted for the paper ( $M=3.69$ ,  $SD=1.06$ ). While the learners’ response towards new patterns of assessments were favourable, opening up possibilities for experimentation and innovation in this area, the comparatively lower rating on the aspect of being challenged indicates two possibilities. Either the learners have acquired the skills that the course aimed to enable them with or that the assessment strategies have to be reworked to meet the requirement of the course. Overall, the average responses in the assessment category can be considered neutral ( $M=3.44$ ,  $SD=0.91$ ). Therefore, it is difficult to arrive at a conclusive understanding on the assessment pattern from the empirical data. Also, as observed in the entire study, there was no statistically significant impact of the gender variable on the responses; however, the impact of disciplinary specialization as revealed through the ANOVA test results point out that single-major students reported better satisfaction with assessment patterns. This is to suggest that in overall terms the single-major students received the course better.

## **Conclusion**

The present study, conducted with an objective to discuss the possibility of designing and administering a GE course suitable for the digital natives, successfully provides an instance of a course that could significantly influence the pedagogical approaches to ELT in the higher education context in India. This course makes provisions to consider the evolving nature of learners and learning in the domain of curriculum development and pedagogical practices. There is no refuting the fact that the content of the course is subject to evolve over the period of time. However, pedagogical inquiries as the present one are

relevant owing to the dormancy of approaches to ELT courses in Indian higher education context. Here, it is imperative to mention that pedagogical inquiries like the one in this study have certain limitations and challenges. One of the limitations of the present study is that it is based on cross-sectional, empirical data, which narrows the possibility to further analyze the observations made. A longitudinal observation-based data could be generated in the future to support the claims and focus-group interviews can be conducted to gain further insights on the perceptions of the learners about applicability and relevance of the new course. Further, since the course enables skills that have wider applicability, learners can be interviewed to gain insights on how the skills acquired through this course helped them in other courses they enrolled for and also in various projects and internships. Also, the section on assessment and testing demands specific attention enabling scope for future research in the area. Studies can be conducted to design and develop suitable assessment patterns for a course that attempts to enhance the critical thinking of the learners. The approach adopted in the course to test the skills acquired by exposing the learner to rhetorical compositions that are not part of the classroom discussions needs to be further developed and contextualized by assessing the needs of the learner.

The course introduced evidently provides new direction in terms of the GE courses that have otherwise been repetitive and relatively stagnant in India. The attempted reconceptualization of the GE course initiates the possibility for a paradigmatic change in the manner in which ELT is envisioned, formulated, and implemented in India. Such initiatives that attempt to rethink, reevaluate, and reconceive established educational systems are discernable, especially in a world where technologies, identities, cultures, and learners are ever-evolving and fluid. In such a world, the educational system needs to evolve if it has to stay relevant to its learners and their ever-so-changing learning needs.

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### **Note on Contributors**

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## Appendix 1: Questionnaire

27/08/2019

English Language and Composition Survey

### English Language and Composition Survey

There are no right or wrong answers to the questions.  
Select only one option for each question.  
Choose the option which you feel fits best according to you.

\* Required

1. Name \*

---

2. Register No.

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3. Class \*

Check all that apply:

- ☐ ENGH
- ☐ EPH
- ☐ ECOA
- ☐ ECOB
- ☐ JOH
- ☐ MEP
- ☐ PSYH

4. Gender \*

Check all that apply:

- ☐ Female
- ☐ Male
- ☐ Prefer not to say
- ☐ Other

5. How effective do you think the course English Language and Composition I and II is to enhance your language skills (Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing) \*

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Never	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Always

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1GutNLb8ZBemkIWUkVaZ6atVLZQ4-5t2ZH7LhVMRbMQ/edit>

1/4



6. Does the course make you aware, think, and, raise questions on society and its practices. \*

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Never	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Always

7. Do you think reading fiction (poetry and prose) will be more effective than reading articles (like we are doing in the class). \*

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Never	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Always

8. Do you think English Language and Composition I and II are well connected and coherent? \*

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Never	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Always

9. Do you think you were able to apply the methods (rhetoric analysis, close-reading, rhetoric production) introduced in the 1st semester to analyse the readings provided in the 2nd semester. \*

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Never	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Always

10. Have your reading and writing skills been challenged by not answering direct questions? \*

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Never	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Always

11. Do you appreciate challenging modes of assessment ? \*

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Never	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Always

**12. How important is rhetoric according to you in your everyday life? \****Mark only one oval.*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Never	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Always

**13. How important do you think the role of a teacher is in this course. \****Mark only one oval.*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Never	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Always

**14. Do you think the method (interactive lectures and discussions) adopted by the teacher for this course influences the way you understand rhetoric. \****Mark only one oval.*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Never	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Always

**15. Do you think the change of the teacher/instructor impacts the mode in which the course is perceived. \****Mark only one oval.*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Never	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Always

**16. After completing the course (English Language and Composition I and II) are you in a position to produce rhetoric and understand the politics behind that production? \****Mark only one oval.*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Never	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Always

**17. As the course takes into account subjective opinions, offer your views for the improvement of the course.**


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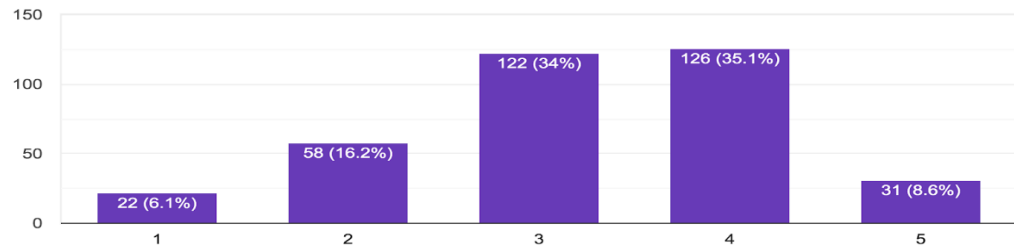


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## Appendix 2: Graphical Representation of Responses

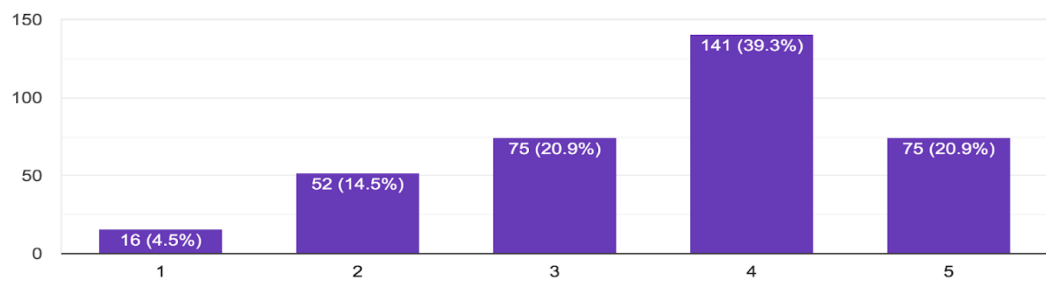
How effective do you think the course English Language and Composition I and II is to enhance your language skil...(Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing)

359 responses



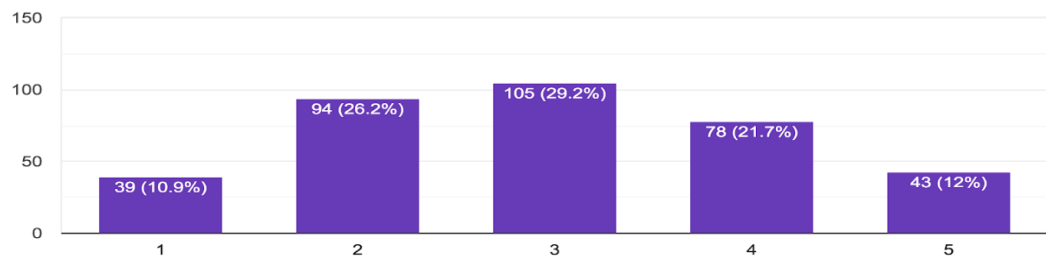
Does the course make you aware, think, and, raise questions on society and its practices.

359 responses



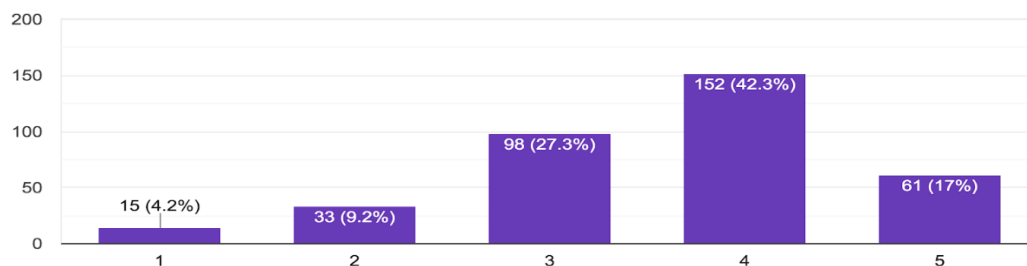
Do you think reading fiction (poetry and prose) will be more effective than reading articles (like we are doing in the class).

359 responses



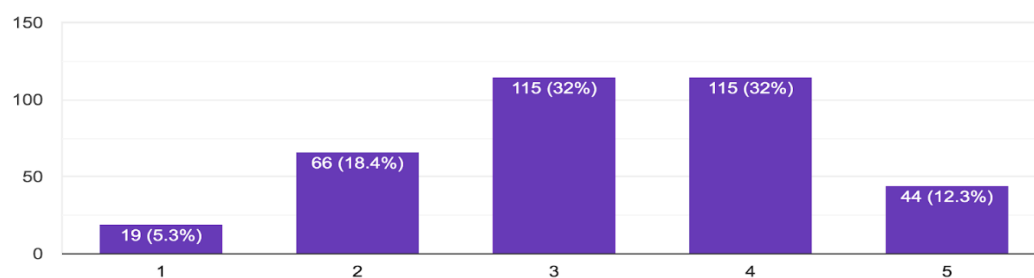
Do you think you were able to apply the methods (rhetoric analysis, close-reading, rhetoric production) int...readings provided in the 2nd semester.

359 responses



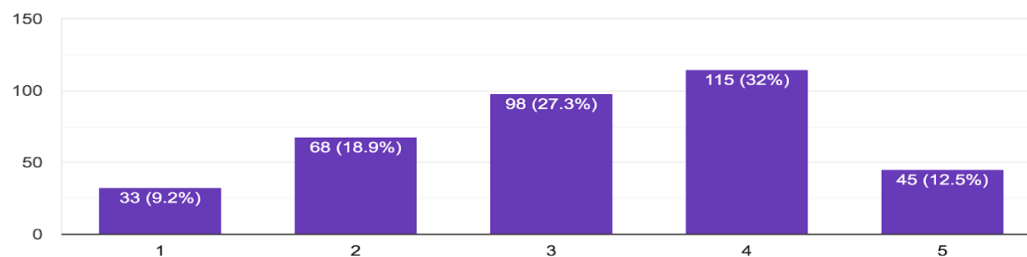
Do you think English Language and Composition I and II are well connected and coherent?

359 responses



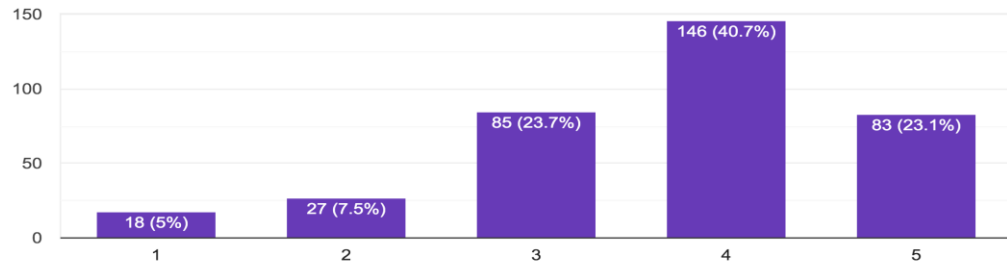
Have your reading and writing skills been challenged by not answering direct questions?

359 responses



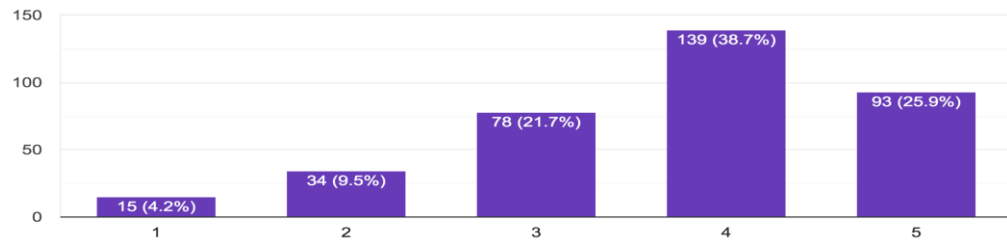
### Do you appreciate challenging modes of assessment ?

359 responses



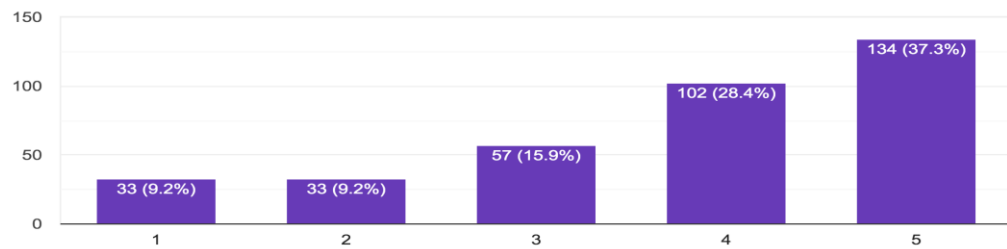
### How important is rhetoric according to you in your everyday life?

359 responses



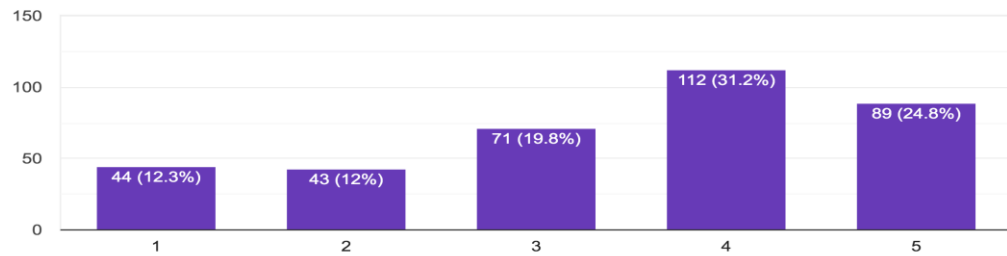
### How important do you think the role of a teacher is in this course.

359 responses



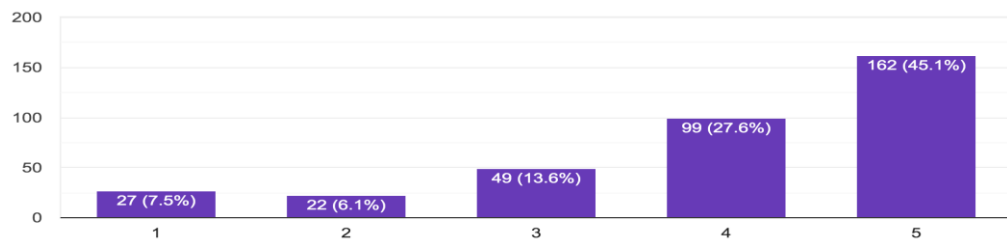
**Do you think the method (interactive lectures and discussions) adopted by the teacher for this course influences the way you understand rhetoric.**

359 responses



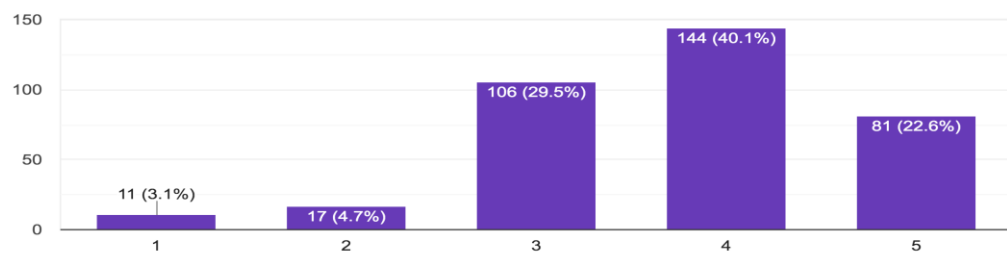
**Do you think the change of the teacher/instructor impacts the mode in which the course is perceived.**

359 responses



**After completing the course (English Language and Composition I and II) are you in a position to produce rhetori...d the politics behind that production?**

359 responses



## **Exonormativity, Endonormativity or Multilingualism: Teachers' Attitudes towards Pronunciation Issues in Three Kachruian Circles**

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\*Corresponding author

### **Abstract**

Despite the accumulated body of debates surrounding English as an international language (EIL), and stronger orientations towards mutual intelligibility, little research has been done on teachers' attitudes towards English pronunciation pedagogy in ELT classes. To address this gap, this study explores the perceptions of 352 English teachers from all Kachruvian Circles towards pronunciation pedagogy within the framework of English as an international language. Using a questionnaire, supplemented with interviews, the findings demonstrated an exonormative-endonormative gap among teachers in expanding circles (EC) and outer circles (OC). While teachers in the EC circle were in favour of native-speakerism, OC teachers highly valued their own local forms of English while they were in favour of native English. Native English teachers' replies were also indicative of their acceptance of different varieties of English. Teachers' preferences in regard to their attitudes towards varieties of English also show a disconnection between teachers' theoretical knowledge and practical knowledge about world Englishes (WEs) in ELT classes which might have influenced the construction of their professional identity. This article argues that together with encouraging and valuing different varieties of English, it is essential to promote ways to raise teachers' awareness in order to acclimate to the rapid spread and changes of English as a pluricentric language.

**Keywords:** Language attitude, pronunciation, intelligibility, English as an International language, language awareness, identity

### **Introduction**

The rapid spread of English has inspired many scholars to look into the probability of shifting from traditional ENL (English as a native language) pedagogy in ELT (English Language Teaching) to EIL (English as an International Language (Ahn, 2017; Kirkpatrick, 2007; Matsuda, 2012, 2019; McKay, 2012, 2018; Monfared, 2018, 2020; Sadeghpour & Sharifian, 2019;

Sharifian, 2009). Taken together, the goal of teaching English today from an EIL perspective is to prepare the learners to use English to become part of the globalised world, which is linguistically and culturally various, and thus both teachers and EIL courses should prepare learners for such diversity and to represent English as a pluralistic and dynamic component rather than a monolithic and static one. In terms of pronunciation instruction, Global intelligibility has been accentuated over native accent for fruitful communication in international contexts (Crystal, 2003; Jenkins, 2005, 2018). Considering pronunciation instruction, intelligibility should be set as a goal by teachers and learners (Derwing & Munro, 2005; Munro & Derwing, 2011). Jenkins (2003) believes that EIL learners should be stimulated not to follow a native speaker (NS) norm, but try to go towards “international phonological intelligibility” (p. 86). Following Jenkins, McKay (2012) puts emphasis on language awareness among all users of English, including both L1 and L2 speakers. He believes that EIL users should be aware of notions such as language innovation, varying linguistic and pragmatic norms, negotiation strategies, and social sensitivity in language use.

One of the most important issues which gives English an international status is the outgrowing number of its users. Kachru (1986, 1992) used a model that classified the role and use of English around the world into three concentric circles: Inner Circle, the Outer Circle and the Expanding Circle countries. Inner Circle countries are those where English is used as the first language. The Outer Circle are multilingual and English has the status of a second language along with other languages. Finally, in the Expanding Circle countries, English has the status of a foreign language in teaching and learning. Indubitably, major users of English are bilingual and multilingual speakers from the Outer and Expanding Circles. The vast majority of communication in English does not involve any “native speakers” of the language (Graddol, 1997). Considering the mentioned points, it would seem necessary that pronunciation instruction should also relocate towards planning an international version of English which can help learners build a realistic goal for their pronunciation and develop their own intelligible accent (Derwing & Munro, 2005, 2015; Monfared, 2020).

However, in the area of EIL, pronunciation pedagogy is still a problematic issue for both teachers and learners. In listening to the voices of nonnative speakers, we understand that English language learners’ orientation is still towards inner circle norms as their standards (Derwing, 2003; Li, 2009; Timmis, 2002; Üresin & Karakaş, 2019). In English language teaching context, teachers may still be confused regarding what learners expect from their pronunciation instruction and learners might also be frustrated by facing different varieties of English. Although a number of studies have been accomplished on teachers’ and learners’ attitudes towards EIL, there are fewer studies that are concerned with the perceptions of teachers regarding pronunciation instruction and different varieties of English from an EIL perspective (Monfared, 2020; Tsang, 2019; Üresin & Karakaş, 2019).



The current study investigates the developing picture of EIL pronunciation and evaluation of multiple varieties of English from the perspective of teachers across the three circles and makes recommendations to facilitate a better synchronization of teachers' instructions and learners' needs in ELT contexts.

## **Literature Review**

### ***Pedagogical Models for ELT in Pronunciation Teaching***

In view of the close relationship between the selection of appropriate ELT instructional models and context-dependent pronunciation goals, Kirkpatrick (2007) presents three different pedagogical ELT models: an exonormative native speaker (NS) model; an endonormative nativised model, and a lingua franca model.

The exonormative native speaker model (Kirkpatrick, 2007, pp. 184-189) represents an extension of inner circle English culture and values. From the view of this model, the British "Received Pronunciation" or the general American accent are the proper pronunciations in ELT class. The main reason that it is so popular, especially in expanding circle countries, is that models based upon inner circle or what has been understood as "native speaker" English are seen to own "prestige and legitimacy". Kirkpatrick (2007) further explains that exonormative models have been codified, meaning they are supported by established grammar and dictionaries. Inner circle English is often seen as the "proper" English and the governments that strive towards these standards are providing the best for their people (Kirkpatrick, 2007, p.185). According to Kirkpatrick (2007), the main disadvantages of this model is that it disempowers local teachers, it provides a vehicle for the industry of language resources generation and it provides a model, native pronunciation here, that English language learners may feel impossible to attain.

An endonormative model which has a widespread social acceptance in the outer circle countries (e.g., India, South Africa, Malaysia) is one where "a localised version of the language has become socially acceptable" (Kirkpatrick, 2007, p. 189). In this model, a codified endonormative model (Kirkpatrick, 2007; Schneider, 2011) based on the acrolect of the local variety (i.e. spoken by local educated speakers) could be used in local ELT classrooms. In this model, the multilingualism of teachers is considered an asset because the teachers provide a model of English that seems attainable by the learners and the teachers are more familiar with social norms and local school community and money is not wasted by governments on employing expensive native teachers and buying expensive teaching materials. Regarding expanding circle countries, one big problem is that for issues like pragmatic reasons, unavailability of resources and for a sense of prestige the exonormative model would still be applied by EC teachers. This is a particularly sensitive issue when considered in light of regional hegemonic

power as being a far more pressing issue than distant hegemonic power. China would hardly take on an Indian endonormative English.

Kirkpatrick (2007) presents the third model of English as multilingual model which is a component of the so-called Lingua Franca approach. Sewell (2016) believes that the lingua franca approach was “promising” because it oriented pronunciation teaching “towards the intelligibility principle rather than the nativeness principle, regardless of whether we see ‘nativeness’ as residing in native-speaker models or in local ‘nativised’ ones, as both are seen as too restrictive” (p. 98). Kirkpatrick (2007, p. 194) explains, “in aiming to teach and learn English in ways that would allow for effective communication across linguistic and cultural boundaries the focus of the classroom moves from the acquisition of the norms associated with a standard model to a focus on learning linguistic features, cultural information and communicative strategies that will facilitate communication”. Sarvandi & Ekstam (2018, p. 49) also mention that:

the lingua franca approach provides a radical departure from the traditional methods and tenets of English language teaching, where native speaker English has been preferred. This has been at the expense of other varieties of English. Most importantly, the approach suggested here takes into account that English is being used as a lingua franca in settings far removed – geographically, politically and linguistically, from traditional Anglophone and Anglocultural centers.

Considering the above-mentioned models, as Kirkpatrick (2007) has said WEs is about identity, and ELF is about communication. Regarding EIL, for Sharifian (2009), identity and communication are both part of his new EIL, and we should not underestimate how different our various world views can be. So, in this paper, ELF and EIL as sub-paradigms of WEs, which can, as Seidlhofer (2011) has said, add substance and offer fresh perspectives to constructs which are central to the field as a whole. Additionally, it can be concluded that EIL, WE and ELF are not conflicting paradigms but as concepts that resonate strongly with each other in terms of thinking about and researching the worldwide spread of English. EIL includes both WE speakers’ interactions in their own country and interactions in ELF. As House (2012, pp. 186-187) mentions EIL is:

the most comprehensive term and also the linguistically most complex use of English, as it captures the vast formal and functional plurality of English indicating national, regional, local, cross-cultural variation, the distinct identities of these varieties, their degrees of acculturation and indigenization, and their embeddedness in a multilingual and multicultural context.

## The Pedagogy of EIL, How to EIL-ise Our Courses?

The rapid growth and the changing sociolinguistic reality of English has encouraged many scholars to look into the possibility of shifting from traditional ENL (English as a native language) pedagogy in ELT to EIL with multiple accents, vocabulary, grammars and pragmatic discourse conventions (Jenkins, 2018; Kirkpatrick, 2007; Matsuda, 2019; McKay, 2018; Monfared, 2020; Sharifian, 2009). McKay (2016, p.) listed 12 criteria for teaching EIL (see Table 1).

Table 1

*Twelve keys to developing EIL (adopted from McKay and Brown, 2016, p.97)*

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### **Establish EIL Intelligibility Standards**

1. Respect the local culture of learning and promote a sense of ownership and confidence in the local varieties of English.
2. Provide students with awareness of linguistic and cultural differences in the various contexts in which English is learned and used.
3. Include models of and local appropriation” (Alptekin, 2002, p. 63) to help learners be “both global and local speakers of English” (Kramsch & Sullivan, 1996, p. 211) who can function both at home in their national culture as well as internationally.

### **Provide EIL Motivation**

1. Include successful bilinguals as English language and pedagogic models.
2. Include materials and activities based on local and international situations that are recognizable and applicable to the students’ everyday lives, pertaining to both NS-NNS and NNS-NNS interactions.
3. Support learning English efficiently and help students feel better about their English learning.
4. Enhance students’ access to the international body of knowledge in English.

### **Develop EIL Fluency**

1. Furnish students with strategies for handling linguistic and cultural differences in the various contexts in which English is learned and used.
  2. Foster English language and cultural behaviors that will help students communicate effectively with others and achieve friendly relations with English speakers from any culture.
  3. Help students achieve intelligibility when they are among other English speakers.
  4. Enhance students’ capacity to contribute to the international body of knowledge in English.
- 

As cultural and linguistic diversity is the focal point of EIL curriculum, English learners should be guided towards raising their awareness of English language variation and they should be helped to communicate more

effectively with interlocutors from different lingua-cultural backgrounds in different contexts.

The changing nature of English has inspired many language educators to integrate the principles advocated by the EIL paradigm in ELT and to reconsider curriculum and syllabus materials (Brown, 2012; McKay, 2012), teaching methodology (Brown, 2006; Kumaravadivelu, 2003), language testing (Hu, 2012; Jenkins & Leung, 2017; Lowenberg, 2012; Monfared, 2020) and many other areas in the field of English language teaching and learning.

### **The EIL Pedagogy and Implications for Pronunciation Practice**

With the expansion of EIL and the recognition of the pluricentricity of English and the plurilingual nature of today's communication with multicultural users of English, there is a need to consider how this might have an effect on the shaping of pronunciation practice in the EIL classrooms. The issue of pronunciation has been vastly discussed by many scholars in the past few years (Derwing & Munro, 1997, 2005; Jenkins, 2002, 2018; Munro & Derwing, 2011). Jenkins (2002) believes that the intuitions that are taken into account for pronunciation are those of native speakers and little consideration is given to the intelligibility of non-native speakers, in spite of the fact that non-native speakers outnumber native speakers by a significant margin. Jenkin (2000, p. 207) also points out, "a native-like accent is not necessary for intelligibility in ELF interaction". EIL teaching should include a sociocultural component to lessons in order to help learners to share aspects of their culture with other English speakers (Alptekin, 2002; McKay, 2018).

One of the most important issues that dominates the discussion on pronunciation goals for EIL is the issue of accent. By accent, we refer to the segmental (vowel and consonants) and suprasegmental (e.g. stress, pitch, intonation and rhythm) features of a person's pronunciation that shapes a particular pronunciation patterning. According to Morley (1991, pp. 498-501), near-native like accent is unattainable for many English speakers because of some factors such as neurological, psychological and cognitive ones. The issues of accent are also closely tied to identity. Unfortunately, ELT materials usually construct a highly positive image of native speakers, so non-native speakers attempt to assimilate those identities by imitating NS accent. As McKay (2012, p. 39) states, it is essential for teachers and students to develop critical language awareness in order to understand and challenge unequal relations of power that are manifested not only in language and culture but also in race, gender, class, and other social categories. English exists not just globally, but also locally, alongside local languages and cultures in multilingual communities of bilingual speakers (Brutt-Griffler, 2002). English alongside its obvious position as a global language should serve the diverse local needs of its multilingual, multicultural communities of EIL speakers and learners (Alsagoff, 2012). This glocal perspective should raise teachers' and

learners' awareness that English as McKay (2002, pp.125-128) states is used within multilingual communities and by typically bilingual users of English for both global and local purposes and that cross-cultural communication must be considered for the use of EIL. Therefore, acquiring a native-like competence may neither be desired nor necessary.

Another important issue concerning EIL goals is the issue of intelligibility. Derwing and Munro (1997) divide intelligibility into subjective and objective intelligibility. Objective intelligibility is defined as "the extent to which a speaker's utterance is actually understood" (Munro, Derwing, & Morton, 2006, p. 112), while subjective intelligibility (also named comprehensibility) is understood as the "listeners' estimation of difficulty in understanding the message" (Munro, Derwing & Morton, 2006, p. 112). In order to determine a NNE's level of intelligibility a proficient listener might ask, Do I understand the content of what this speaker has to say? (Murphy, 2014, p. 261).

### **Teachers' Attitudes Towards Pronunciation Issues**

In matters of pronunciation in the context of world Englishes, studies have been conducted to investigate teachers' attitudes towards pronunciation and varieties of English. In a study of 204 teachers' attitudes towards Korean English (KoE), Ahn (2014) showed that the majority of teachers display a positive attitude towards Korean English. The unique features of KoE, its intelligibility, demographic and widespread use of KoE were perceived by participants as the most influential factors shaping their cognitive attitudes towards the language. In another study conducted by Coskun (2011), 47 future English teachers were surveyed to ascertain which type of English they preferred. Most of the teachers believed that clear and intelligible English should be the goal of a pronunciation class. However, most of them perceived that the goal of a pronunciation class should be to speak like a native speaker, and this implies that intelligible English is associated with the native speaker. Murphy (2014) collected 34 responses from specialists in pronunciation teaching which characterised the qualities of a recorded speech sample of an NNE, the award-winning film actor Javier Bardem. His study rejected a deficit model of NNE pronunciation and foregrounded positive dimensions of what intelligible, comprehensible NNEs are able to do well. Hu (2005) asked Chinese teachers about what they want to sound like. A total of 42.6% of teachers chose GA, 31.6% chose RP, and 25.8% of them chose Chinese English. Sifakis and Sougari (2005) also surveyed 421 Greek EFL teachers' attitudes regarding their pronunciation beliefs and practices. The result of their study demonstrated that Greek EFL teachers' norm-bound views on pronunciation teaching are shaped by their natural role as the legal guardians of the English language, their recognition of any language with its native speakers and their lack of awareness of EIL.

## **Purpose of Study**

This study aimed at investigating the developing picture of EIL pronunciation and evaluative reactions of Inner, Outer and Expanding Circle teachers towards their own English in the globalised world. To explore this area of interest further, the following research questions were formulated:

1. What are Inner, Outer and Expanding circle teachers' beliefs about the significance of NS accents and their functions in communication?
2. What are Inner, Outer and Expanding circle teachers' orientations in relation to pronunciation instruction in educational settings?
3. To what extent do Inner, Outer and Expanding circle teachers take an EIL perspective in educational settings?

## **Methodology**

### ***Participants***

There were altogether 352 English teacher participants, who were all self-selected by responding to an email invitation to participate in this study. The email invitation was linked to a website ([www. esurveycrator.com](http://www.esurveycrator.com)) where details of the study including research goals, what participants were expected to do could be found. Of the 352 participants, 112 were native teachers (53 from the USA and 59 from Britain as members of Inner Circle community; 120 were from India and Malaysia as members of Outer Circle and the last 120 were from Iran and Turkey as participants of Expanding Circle community. Based on Kachru's (1992) model, English is a foreign language (EFL) in Iran and Turkey and they are among EC countries. In India and Malaysia, English is a second language (ESL) and also the official language of these countries and they are among OC countries. Selecting Iran and Turkey as the community of language in the EC is because of the physical environment where the study was conducted. The findings of the study and users of the study were located in Iran and Turkey as neighbouring countries. OC teachers were met in TESOL Arabia conferences in Dubai in 2016 and 2017 and the author was in direct contact with all the teachers through the linkedin website ([www. linkedin.com](http://www.linkedin.com)). All OC teachers were teaching English in British Council centers. EC teachers also had a TESOL certificate in teaching English and were teaching in three English centers in Tehran, Istanbul and Ankara. All Inner circle teachers were also teaching English in language centers in the Middle East. Table 2 gives an overview of the general profile of all participants.

Table 2

*General profile of participants*

Participants' general Information	Outer circle Teachers	Expanding circle Teachers	Inner circle Teachers
Gender			
Male	56	52	60
Female	64	68	52
Educational Background			
BA degree	32	28	12
MA degree	72	64	60
PhD	16	28	40
Age			
21-30	45	32	48
31-40	32	48	32
41-50	20	25	12
50 +	23	15	20
Teaching Experience			
0-1	12	12	8
1-5	44	28	44
5-10	28	32	32
10+	36	48	28

***Data collection, Instrument and Procedure***

The data of this study were elicited using an 11-item questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed by adopting an idea from Coskun (2011), Kong (2014), Sifakis and Sougari (2005) and Li (2009) questionnaires. The questionnaire contained close-ended questions. The teachers were asked to respond to items on a six-point scale (1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = moderately disagree; 4 = moderately agree; 5 = agree; 6 = strongly agree) based on their own pronunciation. Moreover, interviews were conducted with 15 Native English teachers, 15 Indian and Malaysian teachers and 15 Iranian and Turkish teachers who had previously answered the questionnaires and had volunteered for the interviews. The participants were invited to online interviews using MSN Messenger or Gmail Chat.

Basically, the collected data from teachers' responses to semi-structured interviews with 15 participants aimed to supplement the quantitative data. Interviews were conducted with participants who had previously answered the questionnaire and had expressed their willingness for the interviews. The interviews lasted about fifteen minutes. Participants' responses were audio-recorded. The recordings were played several times to find the themes referred to by the majority of the research participants. The extracted themes were then used to supplement the quantitative data of the research study.

In order to measure the internal consistency of the questionnaire in this study, Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was utilised. The Cronbach's alpha

reliability indices for the questionnaire were .66 for the total sample, .63 for the Iranian and Turkish, .69 for the Indian and Malaysian, and .48 for the native groups. The main types of validity for questionnaire validation investigated in the current study were content validity and construct validity. Before the actual administration of the questionnaire, it was piloted with 62 English teachers in order for the purposes of content and linguistic validity. Twenty university professors in the field applied linguistics were also consulted about whether the items in the questionnaire were clear and the scales were appropriate. Based on the feedback obtained, several modifications were done. In order to establish the construct validity, factor analysis was utilised to statistically check the validity. The second criterion concerning the suitability of running factor analysis is related to the inter-correlations among the items in the questionnaire. Bartlett's test of sphericity and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure determine this criterion. The values of KMO for the total sample, Expanding, Outer and Inner circle groups were .717, .590, .653 and .626 respectively. All values were higher than the minimum acceptable index of .50 (Field, 2013). The whole questionnaire was written in English for both groups and the survey was conducted between January and September 2019. One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) and percentages were used to compare accent perception among the three groups.

The teachers' consent to participate in the study was sought and secured. They were assured that all the data collected were for research purposes only, and their confidentiality would be respected during the study.

## Results

### *The Importance of Pronunciation: Native-likeness or Intelligibility*

In order to illuminate how pronunciation was important for IC, OC and EC participants, their ratings for item 1 were examined. Based on the results displayed in Figure 1, it can be claimed that pronunciation was important for majority of participants in all three groups. The total percentage of positive responses was more than 80% in all three groups. Although the survey results show that a majority of the participants emphasised the importance of pronunciation, the interviews revealed complicated conflicts in their attitudes towards pronunciation in communication. Expanding circle participants showed that most of them liked to adopt a "native speaker" (norm-bound) perspective in communication that their replies represented their belief that English was linked with the native speakers of the language. In contrast, IC and OC teachers' replies were indicative of more focus on intelligibility in communication. Here are some remarks by teachers regarding pronunciation in communication:

OC15: By pronunciation, I mean intelligibility and communicative aspects of language which are more important than native accent.



Accent is a matter of personal taste.

IC10: You should be understood in communication - it is not necessary to speak like a native. Accent has nothing to do with producing meaning. Meaning is of key importance not if a person has a “native-like accent”.

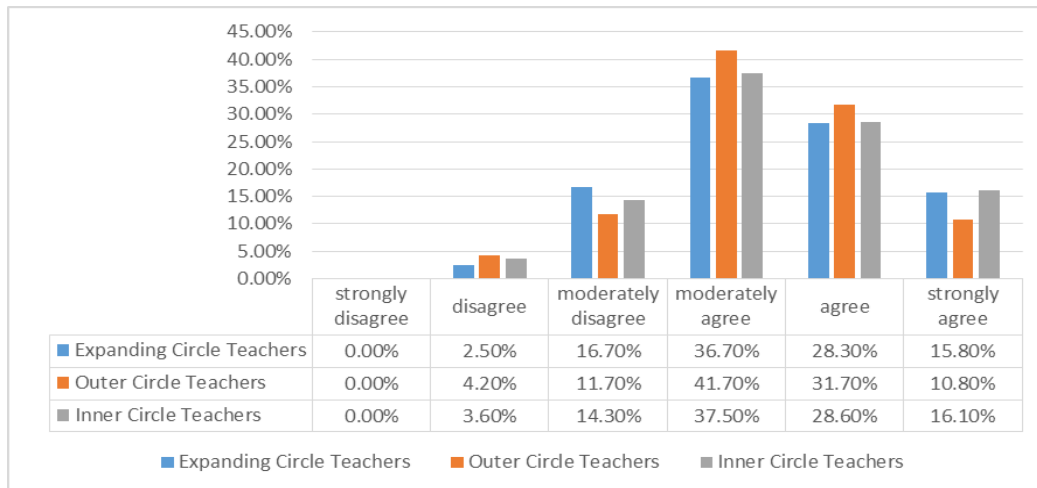


Figure 1. Importance of pronunciation in communication by nationality

Items 2 and 4 intended to discover participants' concerns and desires about learners' pronunciation. Based on the results, it can be claimed that majority of teachers in all three groups were concerned about their learners' pronunciation (Figure 2).

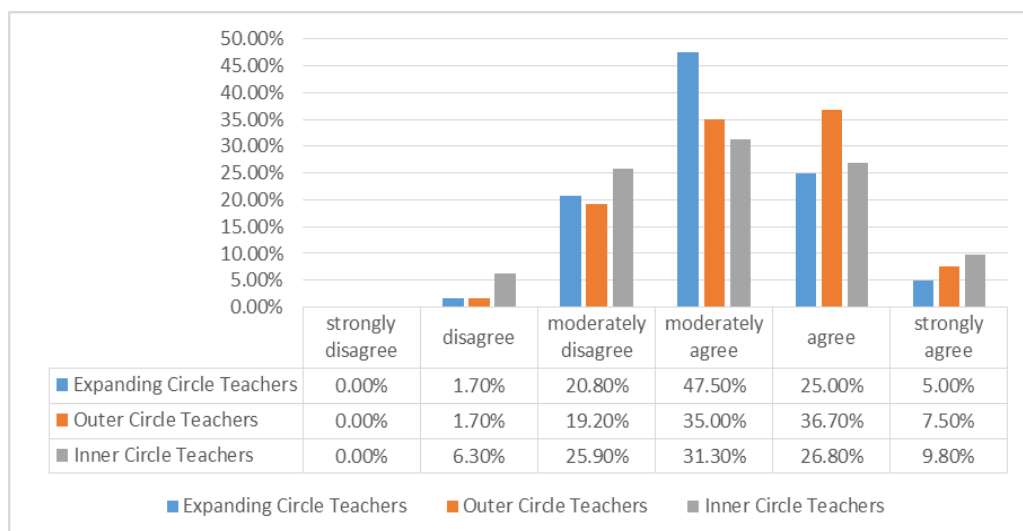


Figure 2. Participants' concern about students' pronunciation by nationality

Interviewees' attitudes toward their concerns varied. Some revealed negative attitudes expressing their beliefs that other varieties of English were incorrect English and they were concerned about their learners to speak English like native speakers while others were positive about other varieties of English believing they were on their ways to becoming legitimate varieties of English and had the potential to do so. The intelligibility of other varieties of English was of significant concern to these teachers. Expanding circle interviewees showed somehow more orientation towards having native-like accent for their learners in comparison with Outer and inner circle teachers. Here are some remarks by teachers who were in favor of native models for their learners:

OC 10: It is important for learners to have native-like accent to be understood immediately by any native speaker, to save time on repetitions, to gain confidence and to continue business uninterrupted.

EC 22: It is foolish to think that there can be many versions of English and assume that learners can seamlessly communicate with every variety of English. Varieties of pronunciation Do impede communication.

Here are some remarks by participants who saw intelligibility as their main concern:

IC7: I see English as a tool for communication, so as long as one learner's accent is intelligible, standard accent does not matter.

OC16: Imitation will never be successful. If a native-like accent comes naturally, then sure! A teacher's main concern should be to teach with whatever accent feels comfortable to learners. Otherwise, it will be awkward and students will not respond well.

In terms of teachers' attitudes toward insisting on a native-like pronunciation, significant differences were found among teachers in the three circles of World Englishes (Item 3). Teachers in the IC most strongly were in favor of not insisting on native-like pronunciation unless communication fails ( $M = 4.32$ ). Agreement on this statement was weaker among the respondents in the OC ( $M = 4.13$ ) and weakest among EFL teachers in the EC ( $M = 3.37$ ).

Table 3

*Descriptive statistics, results of ANOVA, and effect sizes for item 3 (N= 352)*

Item		Mean (standard deviation)		ANOVA		Location of significance Tukey <i>p</i> (effect sizes)			
		IC (N			F(2, 125)	<i>p</i>	OC-EC	OC- IC	EC- IC
		EC (N = 120)	OC (N = 120)	= 112)					
3.	Not insisting on native-like pronunciation	3.37 (1.07)	4.13 (.88)	4.32 (1.06)	29.19*	.000	.000 (0.75)	0.303 (0.19)	0.000 (0.94)

\**p* < .05

Considering teachers' attitudes toward clear and intelligible pronunciation, significant differences were also seen among teachers in the three circles of World Englishes (Item 5). Tukey post hoc tests showed that, when compared to those from IC and OC, teachers in the EC expressed stronger aspirations for learners to imitate native-like pronunciation and to sound like a native speaker (*p* = .00).

Table 4

*Descriptive statistics, results of ANOVA, and effect sizes for item 5 (N= 352)*

Item	Mean (standard deviation)			ANOVA	Location of significance Tukey <i>p</i> (effect sizes)			
	IC (N			F(2, 125)	<i>P</i>	OC-EC	OC- IC	EC- IC
	EC (N = 120)	OC (N = 120)	= 112)					
5.Focusing more on intelligibility than a native-like pronunciation	3.83 (1.06)	4.36 (.94)	4.46 (1.11)	12.74*	.000	.000	0.719 (0.51)	0.000 (0.10) (0.51)

\**p* < .05

When teachers were asked about creating an atmosphere of security for learners to use their non-native accent, participants' reactions to satisfaction with this non-native atmosphere varied significantly across the different circles of World Englishes (*p* = .00). Teachers' dissatisfaction with this non-native atmosphere was particularly high in the context of the EC (41.70%).

Table 5  
*Descriptive statistics, results of ANOVA, and effect sizes for item 6 (N= 352)*

Item		Mean (standard deviation)			ANOVA  F(2, 125)  <i>P</i>	Location of significance Tukey <i>p</i> (effect sizes)		
		EC (N = 120)	OC (N = 120)	IC (N = 112)		OC-EC	OC- IC	EC- IC
6.Create secure atmosphere to use native- like pronunciation	a	3.72 (1.04)	4.14 (1.03)	4.29 (.96)	9.96* .000	.004	0.144 (0.14)	0.000 (0.56)

\* $p < .05$

### Attitudes Towards Varieties of English in ELT Textbooks

In this section, participants' attitudes towards exposing students to different varieties of English in ELT books were investigated (items 7 & 8). The results of Tukey post hoc tests (item 7) revealed that, when compared to those from EC, teachers in the IC and OC, more significantly believed that teachers should use different materials to make students familiar with a variety of dialects ( $p < .05$ ).

In addition, the responses to item 8, "I ask my students to role-play different users of English from different countries so that they feel more confident in international communications" showed that OC participants more than EC and IC teachers (79.20 %) ask students to role play different varieties of English. Consider the following comments by some teachers in oral interviews:

IC10: I think we shouldn't focus too much on a single model for pronunciation in ELT classes; however, presenting different models may result in confusion. In my opinion, it is better to raise awareness while presenting a model without prejudice.

EC 12: It is important to understand that dialects and accents exist, and some exposure is necessary. Having said that, it is generally a low priority if one is teaching in a homogenous society where the basics are already a tall mountain (Native accent) to overcome.

Table 6

*Descriptive statistics, results of ANOVA, and effect sizes for item 7 (N= 352)*

Item	Mean (standard deviation)			ANOVA		Location of significance Tukey <i>p</i> (effect sizes)		
	EC (N = 120)	OC (N = 120)	IC (N = 112)	F(2, 125)	<i>P</i>	OC- EC	OC- IC	EC- IC
7.Exposing students to different varieties of English in ELT classes	3.79 (1.02)	4.28 (.97)	4.17 (1.04)	7.49*	.001	.001	0.709 (.48) (.10)	0.013 (0.37)

\* $p < .05$

### Providing Feedback in ELT Classes

The Tukey post hoc tests showed that there was a significant difference between responses in the IC and those in the EC and OC ( $p < .05$ ). Teachers in the IC most strongly were in favor of providing delayed feedback on learners' performance regarding English pronunciation as long as communication is not adversely affected ( $M = 4.20$ ). Agreement on this statement was weaker among the respondents in the OC ( $M = 3.83$ ) and EC ( $M = 3.73$ ).

Table 7

*Descriptive statistics, results of ANOVA, and effect sizes for item 9 (N= 352)*

Item	Mean (standard deviation)			ANOVA		Location of significance Tukey <i>p</i> (effect sizes)		
	EC (N = 120)	OC (N = 120)	IC (N = 112)	F(2, 125)	<i>P</i>	OC- EC	OC- IC	EC- IC
9.Provide delayed feedback unless communication fails	3.73 (1.02)	3.83 (1.12)	4.20 (.94)	6.52*	.002	.697 (.10)	0.022 (.35)	0.000 (0.45)

\* $p < .05$

## Raising Awareness towards Local Cultural Identity

For item 10, teachers were asked about raising local cultural awareness instead of focusing on native-like accent. Robert McCrum (2010) declares that the world has an “appetite for English language and culture” (p. 9), and that “English plus Microsoft equals a new cultural revolution” (p. 14). He, simplistically, links English not only with cultural identity but also with fundamental human values such as freedom. Tukey post hoc tests revealed that, when compared to those from the OC and EC, teachers in the IC expressed stronger aspirations to raise local cultural awareness instead of focusing on a native-like accent ( $p = .00$ ).

Table 8

*Descriptive statistics, results of ANOVA, and effect sizes for item10 (N= 352)*

Item	Mean (standard deviation)		ANOVA			Location of significance Tukey $p$ (effect sizes)		
	EC (N = 120)	OC (N = 120)	IC (N = 112)	F(2, 125)	$P$	OC- EC	OC- IC	EC- IC
10.Raising local cultural awareness	3.67 (1.06)	4.03 (.92)	4.37 (1.04)	13.92*	.000	.017 (.35)	0.028 (.34)	0.000 (0.69)

\* $p < .05$

See the following online interview comments:

IC 4: Yes, context ties back to intelligibility. A single model cannot apply to all Englishes, all socio-cultural and sociolinguistic contexts.

OC 2: A curriculum should be set to fit the learner, so it should definitely be culture specific if that aids learning, as long as final assessments are as objective and (culturally) blind as possible.

Participants' responses to item 11 showed statistically significant difference across the three circles. The difference was especially significant between responses in the IC and those in the EC ( $p = .00$ ). More than those in the EC, teachers in both the IC and OC wanted to encourage students to claim their own identities with their non-native accents in international and intercultural communications.

Table 9

*Descriptive statistics, results of ANOVA, and effect sizes for item 11 (N= 352)*

Item	Mean (standard deviation)			ANOVA		Location of significance Tukey <i>p</i> (effect sizes)		
	EC (N = 120)	OC (N = 120)	IC (N = 112)	F(2, 125)	<i>P</i>	OC- EC	OC- IC	EC- IC
11.Encouraging students to claim their own identities	3.83 (.92)	4.25 (.99)	4.42 (.85)	12.30*	.000	.002 (.45)	0.349 (.18)	0.000 (0.63)

\* $p < .05$

For more supportive evidence, see the following responses in the interviews:

IC 15: Learning English is not important because it is English, learning English is important because it is the world's lingua franca-for better, or for worse. Now, in the glocal world, it is necessary to keep their own identity.

EC 10: It is more prestigious to speak English with native accent and I can attract more the attention of others when I interact with them.

## Discussion

The current study chose one or two representative countries from each circle based on Kachru's (1992) three concentric circles. The United States and England were selected as demonstrative countries for the first diaspora where English is their native language. Then the study chose India and Malaysia as example countries of the second diaspora for the spread of English, which was the result of the colonization of Asia by Great Britain. In these countries, English is used as the official second language. Finally, Iran and Turkey represent countries where English is primarily learned nationwide and actively used for international communication.

Findings of this study revealed that a majority of teachers in the three circles of countries were concerned about the pronunciation improvement of their learners. Somewhat expectedly, the importance of pronunciation in communication was apparent in all three circles but it was critical in successful communication between interlocutors in global contexts (Derwing & Munro, 2005). Teachers in the EC in particular, compared to those in the IC and OC, were especially more concerned about their learners' pronunciation, given that good pronunciation is that of native speakers.

Upon closer scrutiny of Expanding circle participants, it can be understood that English in Iran and Turkey is exonormative at this point in time. Orientation towards exonormativity, supporting native-speakerism, is

opposed to endonormativity which would accept “a localised version of the language” as the goal for students to attempt. (Kirkpatrick, 2007, p. 189). In fact, more than 87% of the EC teachers in the interviews still preferred for their learners to strive for inner circle norms (i.e., American English) in their pronunciation and expressed their desire to have native-like learners. This finding aligns with previous reports that Expanding circle English language speakers prefer to model inner circle standards (Monfared & Khatib, 2018; Monfared & Safarzadeh, 2014; Richards & Sadeghi, 2015). Literature has often stated that nonnative teachers construct multiple identities based on pedagogical and social contexts which reflect the different social and linguistic groups they belong in order to be seen—and to see themselves—as successful English teachers (Clarke, 2008; Duff & Uchida, 1997; Norton, 2000; Petric, 2009; Widin, 2010), despite the fact that nonnative speakers no longer learn English to communicate primarily with native speakers (Jenkins & Leung, 2017). In fact, teachers are in a schizophrenic situation (Medgyes, 1983), as a result of which they find themselves hating what they are and loving what they can never be (Llurda, 2009). However, in the contexts of globalization and English as a lingua franca, awareness of identity formation by teachers and learners to preserve and protect their own linguistic and cultural identities is urgently called for. In response to such an awareness, Kumaravadivelu (2008) believes that teachers and learners should move from biculturalism to interculturalism (Byram, 1997; McKay, 2002), and from interculturalism to cultural realism (Baker, 2011; Kumaravadivelu, 2008). Cultural realism requires a willingness and ability to learn from other cultures, not just about them. Teachers in the EC need to be encouraged to build their own realistic identities instead of assimilating those non-real identities by imitating NS accent in their classes. This awareness can also provide an opportunity for EC learners to engage with the EIL paradigm to increase their critical awareness of teaching an international language as well as to boost their self-confidence (Kang, 2014; Llurda, 2009).

Considering India and Malaysia, the results of the study show that although British English is favored more positively among Indian and Malaysian teachers as the best linguistic model, they still have a positive attitude towards their own local variety. Endonormative teaching targets, such as India and Malaysia, are more sensitive to local cultures and more realistic to achieve and of course they can develop and supports local sources (see Hohenthal, 2003; Monfared & Safarzadeh, 2014). More than 65 % of the OC teachers in the interviews wished to develop their own clear accent. Bernaisch and Koch (2016) observed that although British English is the variety which is rated most positively among the outer circle participants, it conveys with it a “colonial baggage” and Outer circle speakers of English have a more positive attitude towards their own local variety compared with a native model. This satisfaction and willingness among Indian teachers can confirm the Indianization of English (Bernaisch & Koch, 2016; Kachru, 1986) symbolizing Indian local culture, as mentioned by Kachru (1986),



These processes of Indianization go beyond the surface linguistic levels, and involve the underlying cultural presuppositions and their linguistic realizations. India's multilingualism and ethnic pluralism have added further levels of complexity. In “mixing” words, phrases, clauses and idioms from the Indian languages into English, or in “switching” from one language into another, one is not –just using a code, one is also expressing an identity, a linguistic “belonging”. Such mixing and switching take for granted, for example, the multilingual and multicultural competence of the interlocutors. In such interactions, naturally, the “native” speaker becomes peripheral: Indian English thus has become a code of local culture and local cultural presuppositions.

This type of finding demonstrates a new movement in World Englishes, that is, shifting the ownership of English (Kirkpatrick, 2015).

Native teachers’ responses towards pronunciation and varieties of English were also indicative of their acceptance of different varieties of English in the globalised world (Kirkpatrick, 2015). Most of them prioritised comprehensibility and mutual communication in the globalised world. The data collected through the interviews also yielded similar results.

The overall responses of teachers also indicated that the IC and OC teachers, compared to those from the EC, were more in favor of exposing students to different varieties of English in the ELT books. However, the results of this study suggest more awareness of English teachers towards variants of native and non-native Englishes based on an EIL curriculum. Creating space and time in the curriculum, and lesson plans with exposure to different varieties of English especially from the Outer and Expanding Circles (Brown, 2012) can help learners to have a choice and a voice in their pronunciation classes and not be subject to the pronunciation norms set by Inner Circle varieties. It is important for everybody to realise the features of interaction in EIL communicative settings, and teachers and learners alike need to appreciate these differences. Both students and teachers should debunk this false assumption that people with non-native accents are not educated or not smart. In fact, many nonnative people run their own businesses and are quite successful. Technology employees in multinational companies, such as Microsoft, Amazon, and T-Mobile, are often non-native speakers of English, and this fact does not prevent them from learning and doing their work well. Providing students with useful sources for teaching EIL pronunciation can be very useful to familiarize learners with different varieties of English. Jenkins’ (2000) *Lingua Franca Core (LFC)* might be considered as a functional feature to the training of pronunciation in the beginning. For pronunciation instruction for EIL, McKay (2002) supports establishing cross-cultural pragmatic competence according to the different cultures. She further mentions that it is significant to tap on the rich linguistic repertoire of EIL learners and constantly let them reflect on the phonological features that differ between their variety of English spoken and the other languages that they speak and, for completeness, with a native variety of English as well.

## Conclusion and Implications

The current study investigated the language attitudes of Inner, Outer, and Expanding Circle teachers towards pronunciation issues and varieties of English. It provided data from the three circles of World Englishes. The analysis of findings in the study revealed that Expanding circle participants had an exonormative orientation towards English and indicated their preference for native American English pronunciation. On the other hand, Outer circle teachers, as an endonormative target, although favored British English as the best linguistic model, they still had a positive attitude towards their own local variety.

Although the rapid spread of English in the globalised world implies a stronger orientation towards comprehensibility and mutual understanding rather than sticking to tacit norm-based concepts, this study shows that sticking to “native speaker” norms are still dominant among some teachers. This tacit assumption can be challenged by further education and raising awareness of teachers and policy-makers towards EIL in the globalised world. The main goal of EIL teacher preparation programs is to produce graduates who can teach students to communicate successfully with all sorts of speakers no matter which World English they use; however, this preparation needs the supports and guidance of teacher educators.

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# **A Case Study of Constructivist Learning and Intercultural Communicative Competence in English-majoring Pre-Service Teachers**

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## **Abstract**

Vietnamese teachers of English are shifting away from their responsibilities as knowledge transmitters towards becoming intercultural agents. It is clear that when the teachers become sensitive to the learners' cultural backgrounds and identities, they can function as competent intercultural agents. However, teacher education programs (TEP) in Vietnamese higher education avoid equipping the pre-service teachers with the skills necessary to integrate cultural knowledge into their teaching practices. Further to this, no research has explored the effect that constructivist learning has on the undergraduate-level English-majoring pre-service candidates' intercultural communicative competence (ICC). In this paper, I wish to explore how this form of learning can support the formation of ICC in English-majoring pre-service teachers in the teacher education program situated in Vietnam. I analyzed data collected in TEP classes over 16 weeks, which illustrated opportunities and potential challenges regarding the integration of constructivist learning for teaching career preparation. I focused on the development of 71 student teachers' abilities to facilitate their roles as learners to observe linguistic and intercultural competencies, a combination to support their employability. Findings showed that, grounded on Byram's (1997) ICC framework, the pre-service teachers enjoyed their improved intercultural knowledge as well as exponentially enhanced skills in the areas of discovery and interpretation. They also expressed readiness and willingness to practice in classes. Through the study, I have learned that the TEP courses could be an avenue to help the pre-service teachers explore their changing identities and develop assumptions that their future classrooms will be culturally heterogeneous rather than homogeneous. Based on my study, Implications for the pre-service teaching participants' instructional pedagogies developed through the TEP courses will be presented, showing in what ways they could overcome challenges to foster professional growth in general, and how they developed ICC in particular.

**Keywords:** EFL; constructivist learning; intercultural communicative competence; pre-service teachers; teacher education programs



## Introduction

Vietnam is listed as a country of Confucian philosophies with a long tradition of “face values” (Tran, 2001) that translate into embedded education perspectives, which are somehow inappropriate in light of global education (Pham, 2010). Its appropriateness is demonstrated in a sense that learners fully respect their teachers, as they believe teachers are all-knowing and they should not critique what their teachers say. In other words, the learning environments in Vietnam have been primarily driven by one-way transmission of knowledge. Based on this series of cultural influences, Vietnamese locals feel it is important to continuously seek to advance their intellectual capabilities and positive facilitation of moral practice.

As a result of international integration, non-Western/non-English speaking countries are encouraged to import innovative technology to modernize their educational systems. Consistent with the massive demands of their status (World Bank, 2017), Vietnam participates in the international forums of socio-economic policies with the goal “to become an industrialized and modernized country by 2020” (MOET, 2013a, p. 1) so that Vietnam can be “a nation of competent language users with intercultural and communicative competence” (Dudzik & Nguyen, 2015, pp. 51). When considering English education in Vietnam, where English remains a foreign language, an increase in English learners is expected to continue as the younger Vietnamese generations are provided with more opportunity to improve language acquisition competence. Although strenuous efforts have emphasized modern Western-based approaches (Khoi & Noriko, 2012), students appear to show an interest in exploring at the surface level. Thus, there is pressure on policy-makers’ and academics’ shoulders to find the fastest road that enables citizens to adapt to the contemporary 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Grounded on the theoretical framework of Byram (1997), described in the following section, this study is a time-bound report to accentuate the shifting of instructional approaches, while unpacking under-examined studies on relationships between constructivist learning and intercultural interaction in the Vietnamese pre-service teachers, at a Vietnamese university. Although Vietnamese pre-service teachers have done quite an increasing number of studies in the field, literature informing what focus is put on what the pre-service teachers desire to be educated on, and what is needed for them to feel qualified to promote their intercultural communication and responsibilities is largely rare. The employment of constructivist learning illuminates a view that it enables the foreign language teachers in general to exercise their self-direction to a certain extent. Such learning is translated into practice by taking into account their learners’ academic preferences in inclusive curricula and pedagogy. From the views of their learners, the use of constructivist learning has tremendous benefits specifically for them in terms of intercultural development, intercultural sensitivity, and personal/professional identities. It can be then said that the integration of constructivist learning aims at not only

improving the teachers' sense of communicative language in order to teach that language effectively, but also creating an engaging platform for the teachers and their learners to practice that communicative language. Therefore, the purpose of the present study is to establish more knowledge on ICC that can be employed to facilitate the teachers' understanding of how to develop the students' use of communicative language.

This qualitative research, grounded in Vietnamese higher education, will help widen the competence of intercultural communication among the English-majoring pre-service teachers as part of a teacher education program of the Vietnamese higher education institution. In effect, this study will propose a number of necessary pedagogical implications for teacher education programs at the undergraduate level, which has the potential to equip the undergraduate EFL pre-service with (1) a sense of awareness of ICC and (2) a sense of responsibility for their life-long learning progress that impacts their professionally intercultural responsibilities and intercultural identities.

## **Literature Review**

### ***English-language teacher education in Vietnam***

As a lingua franca, English is becoming increasingly important in the world. Particularly, in the entire Asian contexts, English seems to be predominantly widespread under the efforts of social integration of the nations as the de-facto language of communication across countries. In a same vein, the globalized mechanism has endlessly facilitated the Asian citizens to equip themselves with proficient English skills in order for them to be able to communicate with people around the world, or especially with those living in the neighboring and/or bordering countries. In another aspect of the Asian nations, it is hoped that the rising popularity of the English language in this large region has led a movement of important reforms to be successful, thereby increasing attention to developing the field of Education and, more specifically, the field of Foreign Language Education (FLE), in an appropriate way. From the point of view of FLE, it is advisable to put teachers into the forefront since they are holding the central role in these educationally developmental reforms (Hamid, Nguyen, & Baldauf, 2013).

Traditionally, Asian teachers in general and Vietnamese teachers of English in particular have been stereotyped as passive transmitters of knowledge, although they are always considered with the highest social respect. However, in light of the socioeconomic and sociocultural changes that reflect on global connectedness, the roles of teachers have been enormously challenged. Thus, the teachers are required to shift their roles, moving from those as knowledge providers or examination setters to those as educationally inquiring agents. In this change, the teachers are responsible for the initiation of educational resources and critical translation of the global agenda into communicative practices which can be applied in their school and classroom

context. Without this critical change, the learners are unable to perform well academically. This is to suggest that those learners who cannot progress academically are partly confronted by a wide range of problems, one of which is from their language teachers who are not good at controlling the educational quality and navigating the educational resources.

In the context of Vietnamese education, despite the enormous financial investment to develop the quality of English language education in the country which is aimed at generating the highly employable workforce that is proficient at English language (Project 2020), there is the problem that a large number of Vietnamese learners of English language cannot progress academically in a level that was expected because they are socially inept and seemingly short of initiative (Le, 2007). Some reasons are discussed in current literature. For example, Nguyen (2011) states that teacher supplies and teacher quality are primarily a cause. Nguyen (2011) also touches on the activities that Vietnamese teachers tend to use for their teaching since their chances to develop professionally thanks to professional development are very limited, hence they are undeniably unable to apply knowledge into practice. Particularly, they cannot take into full consideration the learners' backgrounds while they design what to teach, so what tends to be presented in the Vietnamese EFL teachers' curriculum appears to be usually socially irrelevant and educationally unreasonable in both depth and width.

### ***Constructivist Learning and Intercultural Communication***

According to Elliott et al. (2000), constructivist learning refers to "an approach to learning that holds that people actively construct or make their own knowledge that reality is determined by experiences of the learner" (p. 256). Consistent with Fosnot (1989) and Piaget (1977), they discuss that the profound implementation of constructivist learning can be understood as an active construction of meaning in the context that the learners play various roles, ranging from autonomous learners, inquisitive thinkers, to critical investigators. Theoretically, it is clear that the learners are not just the uncritical consumers of knowledge, but as active makers of knowledge and critical users of knowledge. This is true, as Fosnot (1989) explains, because the application of constructivist learning in teaching constitutes an educational intervention to motivate learners in order to reflect on their knowledge that they may grapple with, from which they can construct new knowledge. During this process of learning, they are not simply to accumulate facts and figures mechanically. Instead, they use current knowledge to identify and negotiate conflicts which may arise, before they can be gradually familiar with a source of new knowledge and subsequently bridge the old and new knowledge together. Regardless of the old or new sources of knowledge, it is factual that culture is a vital component, which can drive the learners' sense of interest and curiosity. That sense of interests and curiosity can help them determine whether they decide to intake that source of knowledge or not.

It is true that the teachers and learners should be able to inspire each other to participate in the social world, including the academic settings. In the social world, they are seemingly placed to “feel for the game”, meaning that they hold a wide range of social positions to accommodate the requirements of the fields where they are engaged. In terms of the fields, they represent the cultural community, thus it is noted that the fields are influenced by cultural practices in those cultural communities. Broadly speaking, in any cultural community, there are a specific set of required characteristics, personal traits, expertise, skills, and dispositions which then allow the individuals in those cultural communities to interact effectively with people of diverse backgrounds. This is well documented, according to the theory of practice (Bourdieu, 1990). The inclusion of this theory can help explore and understand how the learners attempt to use different ways in order to internalize their source of old and new knowledge, translate knowledge into practical skills, and acting in different social positions. Therefore, according to this study, it is important to recognize that knowledge and culture cannot be separated when it comes to teaching the learners in any disciplines. In the context of English-language disciplines, it is similar to say that language and culture should be intertwined. This relationship reflects on the emergence of intercultural communicative competence which will be proposed below. Evidently, when engaged in EFL-class learning communities with the integration of teaching pedagogies that facilitate ICC, the learners seem to play as “the integral part of those circumstances” (Jenkins, 2002, p. 70). Back to the theory of practice (Bourdieu, 1990), when exposed to the familiar fields, learners likely present their “habitus,” understood as embodying speakers’ social practice (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992) in which “familial and personal experiences over time” help communicators interact with others. Otherwise, they need to make a concerted effort to familiarize themselves with the experience and act similarly to the familiar fields. To make it possible, the learners are challenged to enhance themselves in terms of knowledge, attitudes and behaviors, which Bourdieu (1977) calls as “the art of necessary improvisation” (p. 8), based on learners’ journeys through life (Jenkins, 2002, p. 71). Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) advise that the positive outcomes shape communicators’ abilities to transform the field where they are acquainted.

How can intercultural learning be facilitated? It is suggested that culture-embedded analytical learning is an innovative approach that supports teaching in order for students to master making meaning from context-based knowledge (Notar, Wilson, & Montgomery, 2005). To master the learners’ abilities to make meaning from their learning of language contents, it requires learners to stay away from the perspectives that English language is owned by the native language speakers, then to give themselves space to foster their personal development and freedom. This process is very important because without it, the learners cannot seemingly achieve effective learning. At the same time, the roles of teachers should not be neglected. By that, teachers should employ a range of cultural representations to suit the understanding of

the learners based on their cultural backgrounds. With this employment of the teachers, the learners can improve their deep inquiry into their own and others' perspectives "in their minds, hearts and behaviors" (Kohn, 2011, p. 80).

There are some studies on the relationship between the interaction between the employment of constructivist learning and the development of ICC. Firstly, Vu (2017) emphasizes the facilitation of pre-service teachers' intercultural experiences in learning communities that are alike social games, as they experience diverse cultural manifestations, including their local contexts and that of languages being studied. To accomplish intercultural learning, Vu (2017) suggests including speakers' native languages, meaning that students' L1s and cultural perspectives are welcomed into the class, in addition to the target language (L2). Nevertheless, it involves tailoring classroom objectives and instructional materials based on culturally responsive pedagogy. In this regard, teachers are encouraged to create synergy between the required set of curriculum and wide-ranging cultural backgrounds to achieve engaging and meaningful learning. Therefore, the study demonstrates the effectiveness of engagement in their cultural backgrounds as learners, which enables teachers to translate pedagogically in order to empower and reinforce learning. In other words, it is imperative for teachers to guide learners to enact certain levels of agency and creativity to construct new sources of knowledge.

Nguyen and Hall (2017) analytically argue about the shift of thirty Vietnamese student teacher's perspectives of English language teaching and learning. After they experience the four-month action research named 'Learning to Teach English', which employs constructivist learning, they appear to place themselves in various professional roles. It shows that they assume themselves not only as traditional receivers of knowledge and active agents, but also as empowering teachers to extend the nature of student-teacher relationships. Inspired by the educational reforms in Vietnam, which seem to pay insufficient attention to teacher training, Nguyen and Hall (2017) recommend that they should be significantly more well-trained in order to master the conceptual and practical understandings of the reform-related objectives and implications. Equally, they should be upskilled to "[understand] the new teaching ideas sufficiently and [model] the changed pedagogies effectively" for their future EFL learners to be open to and interested in new ideas (Nguyen & Hall, 2017, p. 253).

In keeping with what is suggested to improve the quality of teacher education programs in the Vietnamese higher education institutions, the EFL teachers' sense of ICC and responsibility should be largely integrated, which encourages them to challenge their stereotyped attitudes and skills in a way that the challenge they may possess in their teaching performances can result in their sense of how to enhance their pedagogical approaches. However, in current literature, studies on the English language teachers' competencies and how to improve them in the context of Vietnam are largely neglected. It is evident that constructivist learning goes beyond the traditional method of

instruction that focuses on transmission of knowledge from the teachers to the learners. Therefore, the application of constructivist learning in the Vietnamese-based classrooms serves as a challenging, but pivotal, design in that it can support the Vietnamese EFL teachers to consider their EFL learners' cultural backgrounds and personal voices to express their thinking, beliefs, and knowledge with their class/social peers (Nguyen, 2008). In terms of voices, their learners are encouraged to confidently raise their ideas, question their concerns, compliment their feelings, and defend/critique the status quo. Similarly, the teachers who employ the constructivism-related practices will be expected to become highly motivated and self-directed. They are likely agentive to analyze, categorize, and tailor academic English and soft-skill outcomes that differ from class-to-class and time-to-time (Nguyen, 2008).

The widespread popularity of constructivist learning in educational research is evidently supported in an attempt to construct the learner-centered classroom environments instead of the teacher-centered counterparts. Regarding how to develop language competence in the learner-centered classrooms, Applebee (1993) advises the learners not to simply memorize "someone else's interpretations, but constructing and elaborating upon one's own within the constraints of the text and the conventions of the classroom discourse community" (p. 200). Therefore, during the process of EFL learning grappled with constructivist learning, it can be understood that given linguistic facts and features, it is necessary for the EFL teachers to make sure that the learners are unlikely to memorize them, but they do develop a package of knowledge, skills, and dispositions when interacting with a number of others within and out of the classroom setting. Similar to the definitions of constructivist learning described earlier in this section, learner autonomy is also emerging to be highly valued while the learners can negotiate their knowledge (Cook, 1992). The learners should co-plan with the teachers to develop the task of establishing learning goals, drawing out learning activities, and designing learning assessments. In addition to learner autonomy, student empowerment is also a valuable product. It is of value that the learners can facilitate their own learning, given that they are welcomed to raise their own voices. For example, the learners are entitled to partaking in dialogues that enable them to practice questioning in order to challenge their existing knowledge. In light of the democratic learning environments, knowing how to question is a promising vehicle to regulate and take charge of learning in an effective way. In this regard, the learners should experience a variety of times to practice decision making and shared responsibility in different ways, such as working individually, in small groups or with the whole class (Dewey, 1916). These listed benefits of the employment of constructivist learning in teaching are a good contribution to the learners' ICC. In terms of knowledge, interactions benefit the learners not only to reflect on their own culture, but also to develop their knowledge of cultures for which they have potential blind spots. When provided with autonomy, the learners also undertake a learning

process that helps them to be authentically curious about other perspectives on specific cultural situations. In sum, it can be repeated that constructivist learning and ICC development would be key to improving the EFL teachers' ICC. On the contrary, not many studies investigating this correlation can be found in the Confucian Cultural Heritage context of Vietnam. As is widely discussed above, it is important to understand how this pedagogic implication directs the EFL teachers' affective engagement concerning the use of EFL and measures the levels of knowledge and skills to be increased. Therefore, grounded on a qualitative method, this study is a useful contribution to unfolding this literature gap.

### ***Theoretical framework***

Moller and Nugent (2014) indicate that speakers with a proficient level of ICC are better in managing complex interactions in person. Their abilities are contributed to by "self-study, foreign language proficiency, and analysis of one's own culture and that of those who speak the target culture" (Moller & Nugent 2014, p. 3). ICC presents itself in several varieties of English, as the English language is used in different forms around the world. English, which enables ICC, has an important role in assisting multilingual and multicultural interlocutors and is enacted to mitigate communication obstacles in Vietnam. However, in the Asian educational contexts, while the top-down approach is commonly used to assemble native-speaker ideologies and to discourage the assessment practice which effectively judges the Vietnamese EFL learners' communicative competence and language use, I recognize that the resulting conditions where Vietnamese learners are unable to communicate with other non-natives in daily communication. In the context of this study, ICC refers to the ways that work for Vietnamese interlocutors to "gain the capacity to use a foreign language independently" (Socialist Republic of Vietnam, 2008b, pp. 1), echoed by the goal to interact appropriately and effectively with multicultural and multilingual speakers (Byram, 2011; Moeller & Nugent, 2014).

This study derives motivation from the cultural concept in EFL classes in which language and culture are mutually constitutive. In terms of cultural norms, culture should be viewed as multilayered and open to be negotiated between people of holding different cultural values (Byram, 2011). As language is reflective of culture in which it is used, it can be used to help the language users express their cultural practices while building their relationships with others. In an opposing sense, the neglect of cultural integration in language use is similar to asking the EFL speaker to become a "fluent fool" (Bennett, 1997). However, ICC is meant to be automatically developed as a result of the EFL users who interact with other EFL speakers occurring in the culturally homogeneous or heterogeneous settings. This is also true in the EFL classrooms. In reality, the developed ICC is not a result of the learning of both language and culture, but as culture that is studied simply in a way that the EFL learners know about the cultural facts and memorize them. On

the contrary, the enhanced ICC requires a series of educational training that provides the EFL learners with opportunities to expose themselves to enthusiastically exploring, comprehensively identifying, and critically evaluating a number of cultural similarities and differences between their and others' cultural products, practices and perspectives (National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project, 2006). Moreover, literature also shows that to teach culture effectively while teaching EFL in the classrooms, becomes an essential but challenging task. For example, Byram and Feng (2004) discuss that it is a process of socialization, which assists the learners' sense of acculturation. In order to enact this process, the EFL teachers are strongly advised to teach culture based on the employment of ethnographic and critical perspectives which are aligned with the lived experiences of those in another country and specifically explaining what those lived experiences refer to any cultural practices. More than that, the EFL teachers can utilize the availability of curriculum, use their sense of agency to re-design learning inputs, and encourage their EFL learners' focus on intercultural exchange and understanding rather than passively memorizing what really exists. In this way, the EFL learners are able to develop their level of consciousness and appreciation of other cultures if those cultural practices are too different from, or even conflicting, their own or their communities' cultural practices.

Byram (1997, 2012) defines five constructs that incentivize the dynamic and socially enacted culture for the concept of ICC. They are practical in developing EFL classroom goals (Byram, 2012). The constructs include attitudes (*savoir être*), knowledge (*savoirs*), skills of interpreting and relating (*savoir comprendre*), skills of discovery and interaction (*savoir faire*), and critical cultural awareness - CCA (*savoir s'engager*).

Empirical studies on English-majoring teacher education based in Vietnam are not adequate in terms of intercultural communicative competence. Notably, there appears to be a lacuna to research in relation to the educational impacts of constructivist learning on the EFL pre-service teachers' ICC development. Not only should learners obtain a wide-range of abilities to succeed in social interaction, but they should also be provided with opportunities and challenges to promote the negotiation of identities, through which they become better aligned and connected. The research question would then be: "To what extent does the employment of constructivist learning facilitate Vietnamese pre-service teachers' intercultural communicative competence for their future teaching practices?". This case study allows the researcher to explore the in-depth insights within a real context showing how pre-service teachers negotiate identities and decide pedagogical practices in their classes (Creswell, 2012).



## **Methodology**

### ***Setting, participants, and project outline***

This research was conducted through the teacher education program at a Northern Vietnam university. The project included 71 participants of similar language proficiency who were enrolled in three distinctive classes, had prior tutoring experience, and practised public-speaking in their part-time jobs. Classes were held in the second half of the academic year, between February and May 2019. The project was clearly described in the first-class session with regard to the project goals, expected outcomes, length, and responsibilities. Consent forms were distributed at the end of the first class and collected on the second day. However, eight students refused to consent. There were 21 students in each class, placed into seven groups of three, and they agreed to be audio-recorded for research purposes during the project implementation. They were informed that participation would not be counted towards their final course grades, so they should feel free to not participate in the project. In the post-project, the electronic invitation letters were sent to the researched participants, and nine participants agreed to partake in the semi-structured interview. During the 12 three-hour classes, students were taught major-related knowledge as well as practised speaking about various topics in English. By the end of the course, all groups were asked to share well-prepared 20-to-30-minute story-telling videos displaying the students' speaking and their thoughts on the experience and what they had learned most from throughout the class. The videos were posted on the class Facebook group with the teachers' comments, and were open for class discussion.

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

The project relied on three forms of data, such as learning journals, class observations, and semi-structured interviews. According to Moon (1999), coupled with the benefit of manifestation related to cognitive development, reflection offers the observers opportunities to indirectly notice subtle differences in terms of the participants' attitudinal and behavioral abilities. The interviews were spoken in Vietnamese over Zoom, which occurred following the pilot study that had participants who were not in this study and showed that English could potentially hinder interviewees' abilities to fully express their attitudes and behaviors. The researchers transcribed and read reflective journals and interviews alongside a background of observation notes. This was done multiple times on NVIVO (v.12) by doing sentence-by-sentence coding and categorizing by color, which subsequently encouraged me to carefully discuss the significant themes revealed, to be listed. Despite a concerted effort on the careful analysis of the theoretical framework, my openness to the significant emergence of other themes was critical to allow the identification of three themes. Despite a few on-going discussions on the

capability to comprehend the data in different ways, I come to conclude three themes which will be revealed in the following section.

At the conclusion of each class, the participants had 20 minutes to prepare a reflection note to help improve their writing skills, with suggested questions:

1. How much did you know about the cultural knowledge of today?
2. How can you link your cultural background while creating your new knowledge?
3. How much did you participate in classroom activities?
4. What can we do to improve your intercultural communicative skill?

The interviews were supposed to preserve the participants' curiosity to allow them to express freely what they did through the class. Some follow up questions, including four main questions were completed.

1. What was your team responsible for, and how did you find your team to collaborate for a shared goal?
2. What conflicts have you and your team encountered? Please specify any situations.
3. How has your project so far supported you in virtue of cultural knowledge, language skills and English learning experience?
4. What did you find yourself improved in most?

## **Results and Discussion**

This section is aimed at illustrating the benefits of constructivist learning in three months' time. The inclusion of constructivist learning in this educational research served as a line of reliable evidence that this form of learning provided sufficient space to help the EFL pre-service teachers overcome their past language learning experience in their classroom contexts, where they were unnecessarily supposed to rely too much on grammatical competence at the expense of strategic, sociocultural, and discourse competencies. The interview data suggested that students were exposed to different cultures as responsible agents of learning and career-related processes. They evolved their intercultural responsibility and felt content with the approaches that employed constructivist techniques.

### ***Pre-service teachers: exposed to both linguistic as well as cultural job-related knowledge, and uplifted to stand in communicators' shoes***

By learning with colleagues of different cultural backgrounds, the participants were immersed into the world of cultural diversity. When it comes to their participation, there were two unique tasks involved in the project. The tasks included (1) working collaboratively to select the most appropriate topic in a designated field, and (2) working independently on the assigned responsibilities. Not only did they express their optimistic and positive

thinking towards personal responsibilities and flexible body languages, but they were also inspired to share their work with others as a way to recognize, understand, and emphasize if others chose ideas differently during the process of brainstorming ideas and resolving emergent problems as revealed in the excerpts below:

Well, I felt very interested in exploring the exciting knowledge. Well, it's like I was re-living as a little learner in places ... [Laughing] ... In those places, I may start without any prior experience of language learning (Interview)

I have three words to describe our project: More than Amazing. We learned about Festival ... I love traveling more than ever. I learned that traveling is not simply a sightseeing activity, but a chance to reflect and understand myself better. (Learning journal)

The participants were also observed to stay proactive in seeking advice on various dimensions of culture to see how others exhibited their internally relativized beliefs while answering various social events of the chosen phenomenon. In other words, it questioned whether the participants were willing to adopt the positives in cultural meanings that were presented by their colleagues. From the data, it was noticed that the “others versus us” dichotomy existed, meaning that they recognized they and their colleagues were different culturally and they needed to figure out how to mediate those existing differences. This is in keeping with the views of a few well-known scholars of ICC (Crozet & Liddicoat, 2000; Kramsch, 1993). Crozet and Liddicoat (2000) and Kramsch (1993) are certain that those who have cultural differences or similarities should grapple with the privilege to achieve academic access as well as intra-cultural respect (*savoir faire*). Therefore, it is imperative to recognize that intercultural communication is intimately related to the expressive mediating roles of linguistic and cultural boundaries between two people or cultural parties (Byram, 2000). Given the obvious rise in recognition that the relationship between language and culture nurtures learners' thoughts of comparing and contrasting cultural representations, some participants reported to challenge the consistently traditional perceptions regarding culture as useless artifacts. Expressed differently, they no longer perceived that cultures are static, or unchanging, because this perception does not reflect well on the nature of the EFL teaching which aims to promote communicative and intercultural practices.

According to the observations, students displayed their viewpoints on scaffolding values of cultural changes. Sharing their viewpoints allowed them to become increasingly aware of the others' viewpoints and understand the reasons behind changes of perceptions. It is evident that their growing critical perception of culture was attributable to engaging activities that asked them to see culture with their affective engagement and recognize how language

reflects culture where it is used. Thus, these behaviors were obvious to show that the participants were able to widen their intercultural awareness as the excerpt below illustrates:

No ... we were not always going to ignore the facts of culture because they are contemporarily intense and fundamentally rich.  
(Observations)

Alternatively, cultural facts were able to show numerous interesting insights into how the EFL users should take full account of people's manners. The abilities of EFL users to succeed in presenting the cultural features are equal to the fact that they fully understand the rules and regulations in terms of language use and affective reactions to cultural differences (i.e., respect and empathy). Combined with what was written in the participants' reflection journals, it was seen that their enjoyment of collaborative and culturally diverse tasks implies the participants to become increasingly interested in both appreciating cultures which are dissimilar and raising their personal consciousness. The observed growth of these participants appeared to concur with the perspective of Bennett (1998). Bennett (1998) underlines the importance of language learners to understand themselves and label themselves as ethno-relative language users. These ethno-relative learners are skillful at analyzing and leading initiatives that challenge stereotyped norms. As reflected in the participants' current and past experiences, they not only became confident users of language, but also were likely to see that knowledge they would like to learn should reflect on any particular culture. In this case, that knowledge was about what they explored in their team's selected topics. With the increased ethno-relative perspectives, the participants also reported that they could learn well from both individual and collaborative work, besides learning well from their engagement with other teams' presentation on different topics that they were not familiar with. Therefore, it seemed that the participants appeared capable of developing their sense of personal thinking and understanding, which would in turn improve themselves academically as the excerpt below illustrates:

My mind is enlarged enough for me to admit that every puzzle of information is true ... certainly, it is true. (Learning journal)

In the two points of discussion that follows, the participants delineated how they developed their standpoints and interpreted their skills to promote intercultural communication. To specify, they were newly interested in discovering where their personal culture lies (*savoir faire*) in order to figure out alternative ways to understand the features of others' culture (*savoir comprendre*). This finding is in keeping with Bennett's (1998) ethno-relative views as indicated above that both learners and teachers should take a step beyond to become increasingly aware of how to classify cultural stances and

eliminate long-lasting prejudices. Evidence showed that the pre-service teachers were excited about not feeling against others who shared cultural values different from their own, but showing enormous desire to expand their ideas and build on individual and group input. The excerpt below can help explain this:

We were encouraged by the teacher to find out what should be done to address our team conflicts (*Learning journal*);

Observations showed that the participants were clever to classify different types of culture, which necessitates their discussions with openness to diversity and sensitivity. This categorization of cultural types was fundamental because it assisted the participants in handling the expectations of their diverse listeners. To a certain extent, cultural barriers were demolished as a result of the accelerating enactment of constructivist learning that they were engaged in. As supported by Elliott et al. (2000), the exercise of constructivist learning likely facilitates authentic communication, which is an interaction that can bridge people's differently cultural senses. The participants judiciously repositioned themselves to indulge the various tasks of meaning making to construct new knowledge by using a lot of helpful reading materials (concerned with topic-related videos, books, and magazines), working on the group presentations, and observing others' group presentations. Those acts helped the pre-service teachers achieve a grasp of standardized knowledge, and be able to express linguistically in a comprehensive and understandable way, coupled with their levels of flexibility to make the language expression sound interesting and breakthrough according to their decisions on their learning preferences.

Byram (1997) further argues that it is necessary for multilingual and multicultural English-as-a-foreign-language (EFL) speakers to be capable of interpreting verbal and non-verbal communicative cultures by considering their contextual knowledge base. Similarly, Crozet, Liddicoat, and Bianco (1999) show an effort to bridge two lines of perspective on particular issues between two or more communicators, which mediates cross-cultural communication. Therefore, EFL teachers should be aware of how that bridge is made. Engaged in differing forms of constructivist learning, the pre-service teachers in this study enhanced their recognition of the multiple interpretations of the same words by different cultures. It was critical that the participants became more bilingually proficient and more competent English teachers who can ably manipulate their subjective views towards several of the realities that trigger mutual understanding. In addition to teaching appropriate linguistic knowledge, it is also important to employ suitable strategies to develop their linguistic and intercultural capabilities to facilitate their levels of accuracy and fluency.

In another aspect, Kramsch (2009) and Byram (1997) shed light on symbolic competence as well as communicative competence. According to them, the learner's success is equivocally dependent on their cultural

integration and their background knowledge on how to flexibly adopt grammatical patterns acquired from their learning. This is important because there are many prolific changes in the Vietnamese context in terms of economic, cultural, and educational aspects. Thus, the priority is to prepare the future workforce with sufficient English skills and intercultural competence to foster work-related skills and develop their chance of mobility, allowing the future teachers to work well in different academic environments. Moreover, it is understandable that EFL teachers with an increased responsibility and appreciation of diverse ethnicity in their communities of practice implemented themselves with higher levels of motivation. Therefore, these responsible minds are able to engage enthusiastically and inspire other teaching fellows to become ethno-relative proficient language speakers like how they are. One of the methods to help the EFL teachers to practise their teaching in an inclusive manner is to encourage them to utilize various learning platforms which are digitally mediated. These platforms are equitable, which profoundly constitute a trust-worthy global community where languages and cultures are diverse and encouraging. The scaffolding experiences which are readily available can provide the EFL teachers with experiences to increase their contributions as the active learners in the formation of learning experience in constructivist learning. In this study, the participants' engagement in digital platforms to explore cultural knowledge could bring manifold benefits to develop their communicative competences. One of them is that the participants seemed to be dedicated to shared goals. Another noticeable issue is the acts of participants who were willing to step back, listen to others' thoughts respectfully, and build bridges for cultural distinctions for the purpose of achieving communicative goals. The mutual interactions among the participants in the context of team-based projects in which they could learn to address personal conflicts as well as support weaker students than them, warranted their attention to exercise responsible learning and autonomy at remarkable levels. All in all, their engagement in those platforms can result in them becoming intercultural, responsible, and autonomous agents.

In tandem with how intercultural critical awareness can be put forward, Byram (2000) highlights that solely having personal understanding about culture does not automatically give rise to communication success. In this sense, language communicators are critical of expressing language in a way that language expression sounds culturally familiar to their interlocutors. Furthermore, they show determination to play as sensitive communicators who respond competently to interactional goals by fulfilling both culture-general and culture-specific knowledge (Byram, 2000; Swain, 2006). If critical cultural awareness is emphasized, it is recommended that the EFL teachers should be advised to mediate meaning-making processes to allow the betterment of the learning experience and identity negotiations. It is assumed that EFL teachers are apt to translate their beliefs into practice. In response to this assumption, the qualitative findings indicated that constructivist learning served as an educational driver to organize their classrooms in a way that

promotes inclusion and fairness based on English as an international language or a lingua franca, similar to a view seen in Mai (2018) who examines the EFL teachers' beliefs on the status of English as international and intercultural language. Also, another similar study by Gyogi and Lee (2016) suggests that classes are regarded as engaging spaces where learners expect to learn from mistakes, build lived experiences, and enhance crucial skills that matter in their professional lives. Such gained benefits lead teachers to exercise the agency needed to successfully meet instructional goals and professional development.

In summary, the pre-service teachers in the project reflected that all of the mentioned learned skills above were of much help in enabling them to become active agents to mindfully assist their construction of knowledge based on their interaction with others in the intercultural settings, and readily become a part of the qualified labor force. These findings are similar to those voiced by Le (2007). Those skills were altogether helpful to facilitate their career prospects. These pre-service teachers, according to Le (2007), should be able to enact their sense of agency and personal growth in a sufficient, productive, and sustainable manner.

***Pre-service teachers: motivated to practise English skills through authentic learning and to foster professional identities and responsibilities***

It was broadly noted that this execution of constructivist learning could address the participants' future instructional goals which would address their experience with traditionally teacher-centered approaches failing to develop potentially them and their future EFL learners. In evidence, in those traditional pedagogies, the most popular type of EFL instructional pedagogy primarily relied on modeling inner-circle cultures that were of English-native speakers, thus preventing them and their learners from a sense of cultural immersion. In this study, some participators reflected on what they experienced, showing why they had no room to learn, recognize, and appreciate cultural diversity in traditional classes. In another word, their learning had been just a spoon-fed delivery from teacher to student and involved very limited understandings between them. Therefore, this form of inactive learning had demotivated them to actively learn. However, later on, I observed some advantages associated with the use of constructivist learning as the innovative approach that facilitated the popularity of cultural learning, life-related skills, and social orientation in order to motivate the EFL teachers to nurture their career commitment. Those purposes are well documented by Dewey (1916) who promotes that learners' knowledge construction should be largely based on their existing knowledge rather than passive absorption of new language knowledge that cannot give them any sense of recognition. In this regard, the theorization of Applebee (1993) ought to be put into practice. According to Applebee (1993), language teachers should not over-rely on linguistic goals in the EFL classrooms and the roles of teachers should be openly discussed in a

sense that learning cannot be authoritatively guided by teachers when they decided what the learners need to learn. On the contrary, the learners' voices are equally important, who can guide their teachers with better decisions on what should be taught.

Some interviewees argued that the instructional approaches related to constructivist learning influenced the needs of the EFL teachers to reflect on interactions with their learners when it comes to the learners' voices being well heard. The participants admitted that the English varieties must be well-respected. In contrast to the Vietnam's past EFL teacher-centered instructional pedagogies as indicated above, rather than focusing on British or American English forms, there should be more discussions on how to encourage the future EFL teachers to passionately revise and update their cultural concepts in teaching through a lens of the educational forms in relation to constructivist learning. There is a uniquely positive point in terms of the non-native English speakers' "habitus" presented by Bourdieu (1997). According to Bourdieu (1997), it means that each learner comes to the class, brings very culture-born characteristics, and performs distinctively with their cultural acts. This resonates with Nguyen (2008) who notes that the promotion of linguistic diversity should happen in a milieu within which learners are welcomed to foster their ways of expression based on privileged accents, patterns of thought, and communication strategies. In this study, the participants attempted to become the qualified teachers with communication skills. Not only did they speak better with others through skills they acquired from their classrooms, but they also conveyed their ideas better as illustrated by the excerpts below:

I am attentive to other people's preferred ways to communicate effectively. (Interview)

My pronunciation sounds much better. I try to prepare my presentations carefully, seeking a couple of words with similar sounds so that others cannot understand wrongly. (Interview)

Furthermore, it was positive that the EFL pre-service teachers had optimistic opinions on this educational experience based on constructivist learning. They believed there were no values to neglect the contribution of non-native speakers because those varying forms of constructivist learning granted them opportunities to make meaning based on individual and joint goals. This is consistent with the idea of fostering the privilege of being a non-native learner (Vu, 2017) and the potential learning tasks raised by Cook (1992). In the learning tasks, they should be organized in the contexts of authentic communication when the topics taught in the class are outside of their knowledge base. In the contexts of authentic communication, it is a presentation of a multi-layered and multi-negotiable meaning-making process. Connected to the findings, as reported in the interview findings, the



participants' positive thoughts revealed that constructivist learning informed the EFL participants of what pedagogical practices were realistic and what teacher attitudes were needed to make those practices possible. Emphasizing this necessity, Mai (2018) shared similar advice. According to Mai (2018), it is beneficial to push EFL teachers to define what real usage of English language looks like in students' lives, thanks to understanding their cultural backgrounds and learning motivations.

In response to this theme, it was necessary to refer to a line of developed research by some researchers (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Kramsch, 2009) who advocate the development of the EFL learners' cultural capital. Linked to this study's findings, this study's constructivist learning augmented the participants' cultural capital in a way that this form of learning could give rise to their excitement and growth of interactional reciprocity with colleagues, which were potential to help them develop their sense of ICC directly happening in the classroom contexts. Through the findings, it seemed positive that constructivist learning inspired a broad range of academic values and working skills that consisted of their cultural voices. Specifically, some interviewees emphasized that their mindset and growth of motivation to communicate in the intercultural settings would be a positive effect of this form of learning, from which both individual tasks and collaborative projects required the participants to utilize various forms of verbal and non-verbal communication. Along with the help of the instructor, the participants had one of the greatest chances to co-construct knowledge and learn from each other by connecting themselves with their peers' personal strengths and potential. Regarding each participant's strengths, the participants were represented as the carriers of unique knowledge relevant to their personal interest and preference to explore knowledge of any disciplines other than the English language teaching. Learned from the practicality in terms of the prompt use of constructivist learning, the participants found themselves helpful to fuel their peers' academic strengths and ICC as illustrated by the excerpts below:

I am happy that I could have my opinions cherished and have immense appreciation from different parties, including their instructor and their colleagues. I would like to thank them. (Interview)

I am ok when hearing someone mispronounce. I can tell them after they finish speaking. I politely ask them to notice it for future speaking. (Interview)

Notwithstanding the above-mentioned points, Notar, Wilson, and Montgomery (2005) support that EFL teachers involved in educational forms inspired by constructivist learning feel empowered when having plans to reinforce their students who can maintain flexibility and autonomy and reshape their identities. With that being said, initially, identities were a surprising observation. The two excerpts that follow revealed that the

participants played a pivotal role in diversifying the experiences and helped their prospective students to become accustomed to understanding learning tasks from a variety of angles. This is to suggest that working collaboratively increased their responsibility to decipher what their allocated tasks were, and what identities they needed to fill. That was, as they said, because the more people they worked with, the better results they had. Obviously, in this case, the instructor appears to have played a very big role to help the participants' identification of learning needs and to make appropriate arrangements, so that students were able to easily access learning resources and familiarize themselves with their learning difficulties. The excerpts below can help illustrate this:

During the activities, our teacher was so serious, but I still prefer it to work because she is knowledgeable and she can facilitate us to explore cultural manifestations before we could arrive at deeper analysis of culture, instead of remaining conscious of cultural facts and artifacts which are rich sources. (Interview)

My teacher was so inspiring. She showed us what to improve with much care. She gave us a better insight into how English is used in different locations. My colleagues were increasingly more helpful because they deeply realized that doing it with others is better than doing it alone. (Learning journal)

In addition, the constructive feedback method was necessary as part of the project implementation with these EFL teachers. The process of feedback delivery was conducted in a way that the teams were required to review the randomly allocated project of another team. The team members discussed the quality of that designed videos according to a list of expected aspects, involving some work-related strengths and weaknesses. In terms of this method of feedback delivery, the researched participants' learning progress was carefully analyzed by both the instructor and the peers, so that each team member can grasp a sound understanding of how beneficial their shared work was, thus getting to know how they could improve their sense of achievement over a few months as well as how their achievement could enable them to develop a basic knowledge of cultural practices which were critically and creatively presented in the video-recording products. Also, when it comes to the feedback delivery, this is such a useful practice that the student participants could learn to support their future students. Evidently, this served as an empowering space to identify a lot of potential related to the fact that the researched participants would like to apply their learning experience acquired from this project into their future teaching practice. Expressed differently, the assessment-related outcomes were representative of the participants' favorable plans to translate their learning experience to make their teaching plans as engaging and interesting as possible. In this regard, learning experience was

facilitated as a chance for their students to enact their good sense of agency and response to their regular bi-/multicultural encounters effectively, thus concretely strengthening the students' proper use of language later on. Besides the benefits that were generated by the peer support, it was meaningful to recognize the growing importance of the impacts of the instructor on the participants. It was learned that there were required tight connections between the instructor and the participants, clear messages of the learning process, and reciprocal responsibilities for achieving classroom consensus on tasks and evaluations. With the assistance of the instructor, they quickly realized it was necessary to take on other roles, such as assisting one another by respecting their colleagues' working styles so as to reach the shared decisions. Following those aforementioned benefits, it can be said that the researched participants, following their engagement in constructivist learning, were also aware that they needed to act different roles accordingly, although they were not deeply required by their instructor, as Nguyen and Hall (2017) insist, exercising different roles seems to be prevalent during their learning with constructivist learning.

Another surprising observation showed that EFL teachers enacted intercultural responsibility in an autonomous way. Though they had no experience to work with their teammates before the project, they gradually felt open to constructive comments from others because of their recognition of essence and potential to develop academically. This position converges with Bennett's (1993), who states that the state-of-the-art EFL learners are prompted to turn from ethno-centric to ethno-relative thinkers as they step up and interact with someone of distinctive cultural backgrounds in an intercultural setting. Those learners are strongly advocated to make continuous efforts to enhance their ability to observe deeply and analyze critically the cultural stances. Back to what constructivist learning could offer, findings suggested that in order to enhance their base of essential knowledge, peer-learning helped them proactively seek learning experiences which are not offered in their current EFL classes. Peer learning, according to Cook (1992), was very helpful in a sense that the students can support someone that is less competent as a fruitful way to review and sharpen their knowledge, defining how understanding of knowledge differs between them.

To recapitulate, when finishing a project, the pre-service teacher participants saw a lot of benefits related to their stimulation regarding linguistic awareness. In fact, they were able to communicate more effectively and appropriately with people of different cultural backgrounds, to remove the barriers which prevent them from navigating their communication strategies, and to generate deep empathy and respect for others' cultural positions. They propounded the idea that the EFL pre-service teachers could benefit from their high exposure to authentic learning as soon as they engaged themselves in ushering modern classes and progressing in their life-long learning in school and life. These components could bolster the EFL pre-service teachers' critical thinking and intercultural competencies, as well as encourage them to support

their future EFL learners' aspirations for genuine and accessible goals. Theoretically, they cogitated about how to implement intercultural skills and CCA (*savoirs' engager*) (Byram, 1999).

## **Conclusion**

This paper has shed light on the development of ICC in an EFL teacher education program in Vietnam as an observed consequence of the integration of constructivist learning. After a few months of the project, it was found that constructivist learning seemed to have facilitated the EFL pre-service teachers' professional responsibilities and intercultural sensitivity via mediating cultural understanding. From the findings, there were two observations to be learned. Firstly, the pre-service teachers could acquire both linguistic and cultural knowledge in order to understand other English speakers with intercultural sensitivity. Also, they were positive about internalizing intercultural competence effectively in classrooms, to which students agreed, referred to as authentic communities. Through the class observations and interviews, the pre-service teachers' cultural acts were attentive to a willingness to be mobile and flexible in order to face numerous cultural encounters and achieve personal/professional goals. As quantitative data was not included, additional research is welcomed in order to quantify the developed ICC dimensions. Due to this limitation, a series of observations and semi-structured interviews were not adequate enough to explore the EFL pre-service teachers' objective voices and personal anxiety to tell the truth. As far as prospective research goes, thoughtfulness is critically needed to figure out what research method can be more developed to fit the research objectives. The current employed method was a subjective reflection of me stepping back and looking from different angles at how the EFL pre-service teachers could investigate this research problem, and how well the research was established in order to make a clear plan of gathering reliable data.

This research also challenged the Byram's (1997) framework with its theoretical limitations which impacted on the recent studies, in terms of the techniques of differentiating between "selves and others". I highly value the findings presented by Gyogi and Lee (2016) who challenge the overuse of Byram's ICC framework which has the potential to limit the recognition of cultural differences between one's and others. However, the present study significantly contributes to the present line of literature as it examined issues of fluidity and ambiguity emerging in the EFL classes and moves to "go beyond conventional connections between language, nationality or culture at the same time" (Gyogi & Lee, 2016, p. 25), where I framed homogeneous and heterogeneous perspectives. More importantly, I believe this research is enriching the field by connecting EFL teachers' language use and identities, which is substantial to help exert agency (Gyogi & Lee, 2016, p. 25). Beyond what is clearly portrayed in the study, I am pleased to move forward by referring to more scholarship on affective and behavioral abilities towards

intercultural acquisition in a non-linear process. In some stances, past literature scrutinizes that a search for culture in an authentic context is thought-provoking for the EFL teachers to surpass their cultural, cognitive, and behavioral experiences, thus arguing that such experiences can transform from their cultural prejudices to cultural indiscrimination. Having said that, the designers for teacher education programs ought to pay more attention to developing the particularly Asian EFL pre-service teachers' capabilities to teach confidently and competently in various mainstream and underserved cultural settings where their EFL students can choose to study for different purposes. Also, they are urged to express necessarily positive attitudes, seek learning opportunities to grow cultural knowledge of self and others, find numerous ways to explore and interact with learners, and comprehend multiple opinions through critical eyes. Although it is not a key account of what the current study presented, more attention can be paid to encourage the exploration of attitudinal change in the EFL pre-service teachers as described above. From this line of view, the findings drawn from the present study suggested the far-reaching academic outcomes in the researched participants. Those outcomes were observed to outweigh those which were expected, but in subjective viewpoints based on qualitative data. That is why the newer surge of attention, especially in objective observations based on quantitative data, should be utilized for the purpose of extending the theoretical and empirical investigations on demonstrating various positive and negative influences of constructivist learning benefiting the EFL teachers' beliefs, motivation and professional decisions. As a result, this study has seemingly pointed a direction to help other researchers exploring numerous future plans to understand the EFL teachers' perceptions on and participation in developing their levels of ICC. These developmental observations can be attributed to an array of relevant educational projects which can be inspired by and built on the characteristics of constructivist learning. Those projects should take place in a wide range of educational contexts worldwide. Especially, they should be conducted extensively in marginalized cultural groups, such as Asian nations and ultimately including Vietnam.

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# The Pragmatics of Articles in Outer Circle Englishes: Some Theoretical and Pedagogical Considerations

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## Abstract

Usage of definite and indefinite articles is known to vary across different varieties of English, especially in the outer circle. As a semantic/pragmatic category, definiteness is notoriously slippery to define – is it uniqueness, familiarity, inclusiveness or identifiability? Literature has shown that the lack of an agreed definition can complicate any principled attempt to explain the meanings that are encoded by (in)definiteness markers such as articles. This paper considers pragmatic meanings that might arise if definiteness is seen as a semantic composite of locatability, inclusiveness and exclusivity (Chesterman, 2005). Such meanings may be able to account for variation patterns found in outer circle varieties. Speakers of these varieties may therefore construct a semantic/pragmatic system of articles that differs slightly from that of inner circle varieties but can be assumed to express systematic meanings that are achieved through communicative cooperation and implicature *a la* Grice. Some pedagogical implications of these variations are discussed.

**Keywords:** (In)definiteness, English articles, outer circle varieties, Chesterman, cooperative principle, Gricean maxims, implicature

## Introduction

Article usage is known to vary in world Englishes (WE) (Filppula & Klemola 2017; Kortmann 2006; Kortmann & Szmreczanyi, 2004). On the surface, these variations can be viewed as syntactic – dissimilar distributional patterns of *the* and *a/an* that hint at varying architecture of the noun phrase (NP). On another level, they can also indicate variation in meaning. For example, the same meaning may be expressed by different articles, as in genericity in *Did you go to Ø university?* vs. *Did you go to the university?* in Indian English. Conversely, the variation can refer to different meanings that are expressed by the same article, as in specificity for both speaker and hearer in *I hid it in the garden*, *Mum* in inner circle Englishes vs. specificity for speaker only in *Malaysia has the hot weather* in many outer circle Englishes.<sup>1</sup>

This paper is concerned with the latter type of variation. It aims to identify the kinds of meaning that can arise from these variable usages of articles. In order to do so, it will apply Chesterman's (2005) semantic/pragmatic theory of definiteness to a set of outer circle English data

extracted from the International Corpus of English (ICE). Following a brief description of articles and the notion of definiteness in the next section, the application of this theory will be elaborated within the framework of Gricean cooperative principle and implicature. The rest of the paper will proceed by describing the methodology and presenting the findings. Before concluding, it will also discuss some implications on the teaching of articles in English as a Second Language (ESL).

### **Articles and what it means to be definite**

Articles are generally understood to signal definiteness in language. As a semantic/pragmatic category, definiteness is not easy to define and has a long tradition of debate to prove it. Compounding matters further, not all languages mark definiteness or even have articles. Investigating this phenomenon from a cross-linguistic perspective, Lyons (1999) concludes that definiteness is a grammaticalization of a kind of general meaning called identifiability. Thus, like other grammatical categories such as tense and number, it allows for variability in meaning across and within languages. This view may offer some insight into the variation in the data to be encountered below.

The general usage of articles in English – definite, indefinite and zero – is described in the appendix, which is a summary of the insights culled from four authoritative references on English Grammar: Quirk et al.'s (1985) "A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language", Biber et al.'s (1999) "Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English", Huddleston and Pullum's (2002) "Cambridge Grammar of the English Language" and Downing and Locke's (2006) "A University Course in English Grammar". Considering the wide range of uses shown in the table, how does one explain the meaning that unifies all of them?

In explicating the complexity of definiteness, these authors make use of two further semantic notions – reference and specificity. Reference is "the relationship which holds between an expression and what that expression stands for on particular occasions of its utterance" (Lyons, 1977, p. 174). It used to be thought that all words (or any linguistic expressions) have referents (or extensions) in the real world. A more commonly held view presently is that the referents of linguistic expressions are more abstract in nature, often glossed as 'mental entities' and captured in similarly abstract concepts of "universe of discourse" (Givón, 1984) or "mental spaces" (Fauconnier, 1998).

A concept closely related to reference is specificity. In "talked to *a girl*", it can be argued that this girl may or may not be a particular girl that the speaker has in mind, with no assumption that the hearer can identify her. But if this girl is a particular girl in the mind of the speaker, then the referent intended here is specific. As summarized by Ionin et al., specificity is "speaker intent to refer" (2004, p. 5).<sup>2</sup>

Literature indicates that underlying the vast range of usages across the dimensions of reference and specificity are the concepts of uniqueness,

inclusiveness, familiarity and identifiability. Uniqueness as the meaning of definiteness was proposed by Russell (1905). The sentence “*The queen of England* is old but healthy”, for example, demonstrates that there is only one person who is rightfully and therefore, uniquely, the queen of England. Despite this claim, uniqueness is not tenable in utterances such as “Take *the lift*” when uttered in a lobby with more than one lift. The familiarity theory was proposed by Christophersen (1939) who asserted that the notion of definiteness must be associated with some kind of previous knowledge, as in “There he is; I’ve been looking for *the man* all day”. Nevertheless, a sentence such as “Beware of *the dog*”, which is commonly encountered as a sign on a stranger’s gate fundamentally challenges this theory. Meanwhile, Hawkins’ (1978) notion of “inclusiveness” extends from uniqueness which works to cover plural and mass nouns. In “If you want to play badminton, go get *the rackets*”, the italicised NP must be unique in reference to the whole set. However, in “There are scratches on *the tiles*”, “tiles” does not necessarily refer to every single one of them. As regards identifiability, it claims that the definite article enables the hearer to identify the referent intended by the speaker (Lyons 1999). For example, knowing that many people keep dogs to guard their houses may guide listeners to identify the dog in “Beware of *the dog*” above. Nevertheless, it does not work in “I’m going to talk to *the prime minister* about this after the election – whoever he is!” In this case, the intended referent cannot yet be identified in the strictest sense of the word.

The views of definiteness offered by these theories are thus not watertight. Although they have advanced what is currently known about articles to a great extent, the lack of a unifying theory or one that can adequately capture the variability shown by inner circle (or “traditional”) varieties becomes a matter of concern when variation is inherent and extensive, as in the case of world Englishes (Kachru, 1985; Schneider, 2007). To illustrate what this might mean, consider the following invented sentences, adapted from usages in inner circle varieties themselves, and how they do not seem to match any of the usages described in the appendix.

1. His only novel – if *Ø novel* is what it is – was published many years ago.
2. It’s *Ø Ohio University* vs. *The Ohio State University* today.
3. Can I have *a juice*, please?

What explanation can be given for these patterns of usage which clearly vary from what has been said about articles so far? In (1), the singular count noun “novel” is left undetermined, in (2) two similarly named universities come from the same American state but only one takes a surface article, and in (3) the mass noun “juice” takes an article that carries the meaning of “one”.

Can similar patterns also be found in non-native varieties of English especially in the outer circle? Such patterns certainly abound. Consider the following:

4. I am going to  $\emptyset$  *post office*. (omission of *the*) (East African English, from Schmied, 2004, p. 932)
5. I don't have  $\emptyset$  *ticket*. (omission of *a*) (Singapore English, from Wee, 2004, p. 1061)
6. Apparently they can tape your phone conversation and use it as *a what evidence* in court ah (insertion of *a*) (Singapore English, from ICE-Sin:S1A-005#285)
7. The most universalized celebration is *the Christmas*. (insertion of *the*) (Jamaican English, from ICE-Jam#exam essay)
8. Ya it's those computer is all the data in *the computer readable format* so you go the machine CD-ROM. (substitution of *the* for *a*) (Singapore English, from ICE-Sin:S1A-001#188)

The paper's focus on the outer circle is also motivated by the relative stability of many of the varieties found in this region in spite of their close contact with indigenous languages and interaction with other socio-historical variables (Hickey, 2005). It is still, however, important to distinguish such language features from errors or similar non-lasting elements (Hamid & Baldauf Jr., 2013) to commit to the claim of stability.<sup>3</sup> Given this concern, a reasonable question to ask is: Is there any underlying similarity that can be found between sentences in (1) – (3) and those in (4) – (8)? And more importantly, what can these variation patterns tell us about definiteness in human language? This explains why a theory that approaches definiteness from a different perspective is needed.

### **Chesterman's definiteness theory and Grice's cooperative principle**

Chesterman's (2005) definiteness theory, originally published in 1991, is based on Hawkins' (1978) discussion of location theory (which is couched in pragmatic terms, roughly amounting to answering "In the relevant context, where can the entity signalled by *the* be located?"). The starting point of his investigation was not the opposition between *the* and *a*, as commonly was the case. He was interested instead in the difference between "article" and "no-article" on the surface. Following Hawkins (1978), he proposes that *the* signals locatability and inclusiveness (see previous section). But the presence of articles at all (definite or otherwise) also means that there is a signal of "extensivity". To oversimplify, extensivity refers to an entity's maximum potential quality (as opposed to quantity) and hence, generality. A further distinction needs to be made between zero and null articles. The zero article occurs before mass and plural nouns while the null article occurs before proper names and NPs such as "Come along,  $\emptyset$  *boy*", "He's in  $\emptyset$  *prison*", " $\emptyset$  *Breakfast* is ready", etc. (Chesterman, 2005.). (See all examples of referential zero article in the appendix in this regard.) A distinguishing feature between the two is that the null article cannot occur with a restrictive relative clause

(cf. \* “He’s not *John* I used to know” and \* “*Breakfast* you asked for is ready”) unless a definite article is supplied pre-nominally.

*The*, *a(n)*, *zero* and *null* are distributed across the three meanings of locatability, inclusiveness and extensivity according to their +/-ve values (Table 1).

Table 1

*Distribution of articles across Chesterman’s (2005, p. 68) composite meaning of definiteness*

	Locatable	Inclusive	Maximum extensivity
<b>zero</b> Fill it up with <u>Ø milk</u> . <u>Ø Oil</u> won’t mix with <u>Ø water</u> .	-	±	+
<b>a</b> There’s <u>a woman</u> at the door. She wants <u>a man</u> in her life.	±	-	-
<b>the</b> <u>The king</u> stood by himself. I know <u>the girls</u> there.	+	+	-
<b>null</b> Did you come here by <u>Ø bus</u> ? <u>Ø Kanye</u> is married to <u>Ø Kim</u> .	+	+	+

What is potentially useful about this composite view of definiteness is that it requires meaning enrichment from the pragmatic context. As explained by Chesterman (2005):

The features show how the interpretation of an NP varies according to the article it occurs with. With respect to extensivity, the features are absolute: either a surface article is present or it is not. *But the other two oppositions are ultimately pragmatic: [± locatable] and [± inclusive] indicate pragmatically determined default values: and [± inclusive] is defined with reference to a pragmatic all, not a logical one.* (p. 68, emphasis added)

The picture that has emerged in the literature regarding article usages in the outer circle is that they can create untypical meanings when they vary from those in the inner circle (e. g. Y. Kachru, 2003; Sharma, 2005). However, given that stability characterizes much of the communication held in English in the outer circle (see also “nativization” in Schneider, 2007), such

meanings may be genuinely intended and understood by interactants and should be accounted for on their own terms. To this end, the study seeks to utilize the Gricean cooperative principle. It aptly encapsulates the spirit of cooperation adopted by most speakers and hearers in WE situations even in the face of misunderstanding. It also allows investigation into the meanings that may be inferred by the hearers, i.e. implicatures, which in turn, can be tested.

Grice's cooperative principle captures the idea that people generally cooperate in order to communicate. Without this inclination to cooperate, communication can fail and become ineffective for the most part. In Grice's terms, the principle rests on four maxims: quality, quantity, relation and manner. These roughly correspond to telling the truth, saying what needs to be said in the right amount, staying on topic and being clear, respectively. Speakers do not always adhere to the maxims and thus may violate, flout or opt out leading to different kinds of implicatures (Birner, 2013, p. 43).

An implicature is not truth-conditional in the sense that its falsity does not affect the truth of the main utterance. There are two kinds of implicature: conventional and conversational. The implicatures to be discussed in this paper are a sub-type of the latter – generalized. A generalized conversational implicature cannot be easily separated from the form. This means that the implicature “does not need to be computed anew with each relevant utterance” (Birner, 2013, p. 63). For example, the use of “some” in “I’ve eaten *some* mangoes” implies that *not all* mangoes have been eaten. This meaning of *not all* is understood by the hearer each time “some” is used – unless the context is reasonably changed, as in “I’ve eaten some mangoes; I mean, all the mangoes in the fridge”. The added part of the sentence also shows that even when the implicature of *not all* is cancelled, it does not negate the truth of the utterance, that is, the speaker has eaten a number of mangoes!

The composite meaning of definiteness comprising values of locatability, inclusiveness and extensivity (see Table 1) can be reconfigured as a set of generalized conversational implicatures. When an article is chosen, that choice indicates that the other three articles and their meanings do not apply. The implicature is then based on the composite meaning of the article being chosen. Of course in the context of outer circle Englishes, the options of articles are usually binary (see (4) – (8)). By working out which maxim is observed by the speaker, the choice of one article over the other and thus, the resulting variation pattern, can be explained.

Because generalized conversational implicatures are context-dependent, they can be cancelled when the context changes sufficiently. Cancellation is one type of several “tests” proposed by Grice to determine that, among others, the meaning of the implicature is non-truth-conditional. Another test is calculability. Grice posits that a conversational implicature can be worked out, or “calculated” based on the utterance and its context (Birner, 2013, p. 68). Both these tests were used in this study.

## Methodology

The data for this study were excerpted from the International Corpus of English (ICE) (see [www.ice-corpora.net/ice/index.html](http://www.ice-corpora.net/ice/index.html)). The outer circle varieties were represented by Indian English, Singapore English, Philippine English and Kenyan English. Each corpus contains 1 million words – 600,000 spoken and 400,000 written – and consists of 12 text types or registers. The analysis in this study was based on only three – private dialogue, academic writing and reportage. Definite and indefinite articles (*the* and *a/an*) were analyzed according to two definiteness-based annotation schemes that were based on the table in the appendix (Wahid, 2013). A total of 6,950 NPs containing *the* and 2,152 NPs containing *a/an* were analyzed.

As for the zero and null articles, the analysis was based on a case study of “house”. This nominal was chosen because it is made of a common noun and allowed the analysis to focus on undetermined singular count nouns as in (1), (4) and (5). Tokens that function as a verb or an adjective or form part of titles of books, films, etc. (e.g. “The House of the Rising Sun” or “Little House on the Prairie”) were excluded. A total of 1,652 NPs containing “house” were analyzed. The annotation scheme consists of two usage types, i.e. determined and undetermined. Undetermined tokens of “house” were subjected to a further qualitative analysis.

For *the* and *a/an*, tokens that did not match any of the usage types listed in the annotation schemes served as the data for this study. In the interest of space, only a number of representative cases are discussed in this paper. As the aim is to identify the types of meaning produced by these usages, this study is conceived as a qualitative analysis which includes (i) identifying the implicature for each usage, and (ii) submitting it to the tests of calculation and cancellation.

## Results

This section examines several of the usage variation patterns found in the outer circle data.

### *Substitution of the for a*

9. The skin is burning like whereas in Goa we have *the cool climate* (Indian English, from ICE-IND:S1A-001#20).

While the more commonly used *a* would give the meaning of {not locatable, not inclusive, not extensive}, *the* renders “cool climate” as {locatable, inclusive, not extensive} (see Table 2). The implicature is that Goa has one of known types of climates, possibly one out of a set of two – warm and cool.

Based on the Relation maxim, an implicature can be calculated along

the following lines: The speaker is saying something related to temperature, which can be influenced by the climate. Uttering *the cool climate* implies there is a finite number of climate types in this context i.e., the region of India being talked about, possibly a warm one and a cool one. But similar to all conversational implicatures, it can be cancelled as in when a third person (perhaps also residing in Goa) says, “Actually, Goa is just wet”. Although the implicature is cancelled, the fact that Goa has a particular climate is still true.

10. [It was] rectangle all over the place all over the belt all along the belt and the one thing about it was this gold crest would fall off and I had to go and buy *the super glue* from the co-op to stick it back, you know [.]  
(Singapore English, from ICE-SIN:S1A-003#X354).

The more common article, indefinite *a*, would give “super glue” the meaning of {not locatable, not inclusive, not extensive} but the definite *the* here makes it {locatable, inclusive, not extensive}. Like “the cool climate” above, the implicature of this choice is that this particular glue is one of several kinds – normal (strength), super (strength), etc.

If the speaker is believed to adhere to the Manner maxim, an implicature can be calculated along the following lines: The speaker describes “glue” as super and it is not unlocatable; therefore, it must belong to the set of glue types in the relevant context. Glue can usually be distinguished according to its strength, so it must be the glue of the super strength type. Of course this can be cancelled if the speaker says, “Actually, all glue is super strong”. However, the cancellation does not affect the truth about the speaker buying strong glue.

### ***Substitution of the for Ø (null)***

11. They look to the parties to influence the course and content of public policy and through their selection of the present and future leaders they really make a big impact on *the society* (Philippine English, from ICE-PHI:S2A-043#90).

From the meaning of {locatable, inclusive, extensive} afforded by the expected null article in inner circle varieties, “society” is deemed as {locatable, inclusive, not extensive} due to the use of *the*. The implicature is that it is the one and only society out of several others that is relevant to the discussion.



The Relation maxim allows the implicature to be calculated in this manner: “Society” here is not in the abstract sense which is how it would otherwise be conceived. By individuating this particular society in the utterance, the existence of other societies is implied. It can be cancelled, for example, if the speaker corrects himself/herself by saying, “I shouldn’t have said that. We are all in this together, all of us”. However, this does not change the fact that there is an aggregate of people being discussed.

### ***Substitution of a for Ø (zero)***

12. Sometimes I just [,] just fry a bit slightly and then [,] put you know [,] I just put into *a tomato sauce* and onion then ginger and garlic and big chillies or capsicum whatever <w> you’ve (Indian English, from ICE-IND:S1A-007#203).

More typically meant as {not locatable, not inclusive, extensive} by virtue of the more commonly used Ø (zero) in this kind of context, “tomato sauce” is regarded as {not locatable, not inclusive, not extensive} in this utterance because of indefinite *a*. One available implicature herein is it is a kind of tomato sauce. However, the implicature that it is an amount of tomato sauce is also possible.

On the basis of the Quantity maxim, the addition of the indefinite article which also means “one” must point to “tomato sauce” being expressed as any representation of individuated tomato sauce because choosing the zero article would turn it into being general or abstract, thereby exceeding the required scope of the description in this context, which is basically “one of something”. This first possible implicature (kind of tomato sauce) may be cancelled if the speaker says, “Actually, all tomato sauce is the same” while the second one (amount of tomato sauce) can be cancelled by the same speaker through saying, “Wait a second, you can put as much tomato sauce as you want!” Nevertheless, both will not alter the fact that tomato sauce is the cooking ingredient used.

### ***Substitution of a/an for the***

13. No self-control [,] We have [...] But I told you I put on that mini by the way they even go to *an extent of tearing* it you know that means you can’t control yourself because what you are seeing is not you want to see something more than that [...] If your eyes [...] Yeah Yeah (Kenyan English, from ICE-KEN: S1A003K).

The typical meaning of {locatable, inclusive, not extensive} otherwise provided by *the* here is replaced with that of {not locatable, not inclusive, not extensive} courtesy of *an*. One implicature is that there exist other extents of tearing in the relevant context.

The Quantity-based implicature arises because the non-locatability of *an* allows a perception of other extents. If the speaker is thinking of presenting the information in just the right amount to adhere to the Quantity maxim, the use of *an* instead of *the* should give rise to this meaning. But, of course, it can be cancelled if the speaker adds, “But, you know, that is all the tearing they did”. However, the meaning of the individuals doing something as terrible as tearing remains.

### ***The case of “house”: Ø for the or a/an***

In cases where a surface article, either *the* or *a/an*, is omitted, is it substituted with the zero or null article? Are they similar to (1) above? Because Chesterman’s definiteness theory postulates that the zero article is reserved for mass and plural count nouns (see table 1), the relevant article for the purposes of this case study is null. The implicatures that may arise from this substitution are exemplified below.

*a/an* → Ø

14. So it means that uh you find people saving up for Ø *house*, some of them even want a landed property before they get married and uh it may be a bit uh too much of a high expectation but there it goes, you know, uh people do think that way (Singapore English, from ICE-SIN:S1B-025#51).

When the expected *a/an* is otherwise omitted, the meaning {not locatable, not inclusive, not extensive} shifts to {locatable, inclusive, extensive}. An available implicature here is that the entity “house” is unbounded, akin to an abstract idea or concept.

Adhering to the Manner maxim, the speaker chooses to omit the indefinite article and makes available all the meanings associated with the null article instead. If this is to be interpreted as promoting clarity on the speaker’s part, it must be to maximise the notion of “house” itself. The speaker thus implies saving up for the idea of house ownership. To cancel it, he or she could add, “But you know what? If it’s an HDB flat they’re buying, it’s just a box!”<sup>4</sup> Regardless of the cancellation, the meaning of some individuals saving up for something meant for habitation remains.

*the* → Ø

15. C: But my house is in Tirumangalam.  
 A: Tirumangalam. How far about [...] ?  
 C: Twenty-two kilometres from Ø *house*.  
 A: Twenty kilometres.  
 (Indian English, from ICE-IND:S1A-024#56 – 60)

The more typical *the* would give a meaning of {locatable, inclusive, not extensive}. However, when it is omitted, the null article is allowed to move in and the meaning changes to {locatable, inclusive, extensive}. As in (14) just now, the implicature is that “house” is an unbounded entity, an abstract idea or concept. The maxim of Manner guides the speaker to choose the null article over the definite one. The only difference in meaning is extensivity. If *the house* implies a bounded entity, the null article removes the restriction. It seems that the speaker intends to maximise the notion of “house”. What was previously “my house” has become more than just the house that matters in the context of the conversation. It seems that in the broader area of Tirumangalam, the speaker is measuring distances between an abstract concept of house with perhaps those of school, town hall, cinema, market and so on. Each of them may then be conceived as an institution. To cancel, a third speaker could say something along the lines of “22 kilometers from Tirumangalam? Who’d want to live in a house that far?” Despite the cancellation, the meaning of the sentence about the distance between the town and the speaker’s habitation is unchanged.

Untypical tokens of undetermined “house” NPs such as those shown here occur with the null article. This renders the NPs identifiable, inclusive and maximally extensive, turning them into abstract ideas or concepts. In a sense, there is a parallel between “house” conceived this way and a proper noun (e.g. Tom), which is not abstract but a one-member set (Chesterman, 2005). Compare the invented examples in (16) and (17).

16. The intruder must be placed exactly 22 kilometers from where  $\emptyset$  *house* is.  
(Uttered in a computer game simulating life on a new planet involving a single individual)
17. The intruder was caught exactly 22 kilometers from where  $\emptyset$  *Tom* is.

### **Implications for teaching of articles in ESL**

The fluid range of meanings of definiteness that is available through article choices made by outer circle English users certainly has implications for the teaching and learning of ESL in such settings. However, translating this idea into action is not without challenges.

Any discussion on teaching nativized usage patterns such as those documented here will invoke notions of “norm” and “standard”. Although they may now constitute a norm in a given speech community, their continuing use does not contribute to the standard, a perceived acceptability yardstick that is often based on inner circle varieties and upheld by language gate-keepers (Peters, 2020). This is, unfortunately, the usual scenario involving nativized features identified through decades of research in world Englishes – they very rarely become codified (Kubota, 2018). Keeping this in mind, teachers would do well by asking themselves if the students need to learn the nativized patterns. Some scholars are more comfortable leaving such

questions to students because it appears to be more democratic (e.g., Timmis, 2002). However, some others such as Tollefson (2007) and Kubota (2018) question this practice and encourage teachers to be more critical of what and how they teach because these issues are not beyond the confines of the classroom, as it is commonly believed, but in fact influence everything they do in it (Pennycook, 2007). Teachers will subsequently be confronted with such important issues as power, prestige, identity, access, equity and so on, all of which require a hard and honest look at what their students really need.

If teachers indeed make the decision to teach the usage patterns discussed here to students, they can demonstrate the permutations of locatability, inclusiveness, and extensivity and the four articles (see Table 1) with regard to both native and nativized usages. Instruction of this kind can involve comparing and contrasting the two types, highlighting the tendencies that are dominant in each of the circles. Raising students' awareness of what "works" in a given context has been promoted as a practical aim by many of those who are amenable to the plurality of English (Dewey & Leung, 2010; Jenkins, 2006; Lopriore & Vettorel, 2015). Nevertheless, Chesterman's (2005) account of definiteness need not be the only theoretical input for the students; at lower proficiency levels, discussions also referencing the other definiteness theories (see above) may be more accessible and helpful (see, e.g., lesson ideas in Yule, 1998, pp. 23-52) and may provide a pathway for appreciating Chesterman's (2005) explications should they be perceived as too advanced. It is also important to emphasize the pragmatic nature of the created meanings. It goes without saying that it is really the teachers who can determine how technical the lessons should be. For example, students of lower proficiency levels may not appreciate the intricacies of Gricean maxims but a more straightforward explanation of "what is implied by this article instead of that" may be more effective.

## Conclusion

While on the surface, untypical usages of articles in the Outer Circle may suggest a kind of deviation from how definiteness is marked in the inner circle, an analysis such as the one in this paper shows that the former group of speakers may be able to construct a semantic/pragmatic system of articles that somewhat differs from that of their Inner Circle counterparts. It is necessary to point out that the claims made in the discussion above are possible due the robustness of the usage patterns in the ICE data. The qualitative analysis described in the present study points to the fact that these language users are cooperative beings *a la* Grice and intend to express particular meanings largely by adhering to the maxims. The burden of interpretation then falls on hearers who can exploit the composite definiteness meaning contextually to infer the various implicatures based on the substitutions that have taken place.

Teachers can exploit the knowledge gained from understanding the composite meaning of locatability, inclusiveness, and extensivity to teach how

articles are used in the inner circle and how they may appear to deviate from the so-called established usage patterns when the articles are used in the outer circle. It should also be pointed out that both inter-circle and intra-circle comparisons are possible.

In conclusion, the study of variation can benefit from a pragmatic perspective in its attempt to gain insight into what may at first seem to be disorganized patterns of language use. This study is hinged on the assumption that the English used by the outer circle speakers, in fulfilling its function as a communication tool, is reasonably organized for meaning. This assumption allowed an application of the Gricean framework to account for what should be regular human language behaviour of the grammatical kind.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>The concentric circles – inner, outer and expanding – are terms due to Kachru (1986) which roughly correspond to countries where English is traditionally spoken (e.g., the United States), countries where English is spoken as a second language (e.g., Singapore) and countries where English is a foreign language (e.g., Japan), respectively. This model has been criticized numerous times in the past for being outdated (e.g., Bruthiaux, 2003) but for the purposes of this paper, use of the “outer circle” category, as the opposite of “inner circle”, is justifiable.

<sup>2</sup>While English does not have special markers for specificity, the demonstrative *this* in informal English is capable of expressing this meaning, e.g. “Adam talked to *this* girl, but he wasn’t interested in her at all”. This article, used in the form of a demonstrative, is not considered for discussion in this paper.

<sup>3</sup>A similar concern about (4) – (8) being interlanguage errors was raised by a reviewer. One way to prove the persistence, as well as pervasiveness, of these usage patterns in these varieties is to provide quantitative data, which this study does not due to its qualitative design. Elsewhere, though, there are a number of such studies and two more recent ones in which such evidence can be found are Filppula and Klemola (2017) and Siemund (2013).

<sup>4</sup>HDB stands for Housing and Development Board, a governmental body responsible for public housing in Singapore.

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Appendix. The usage of *the*, *a/an* and zero article

referential	non-referential	generic
	the	
<p>* refers to something that can be identified uniquely in the contextual or general knowledge shared by speaker and hearer, specified as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ immediate situation . e.g. <i>The kids</i> are quiet (said a in classroom)</li> <li>○ larger situation (general knowledge) e.g. <i>the Prime Minister</i></li> <li>○ anaphoric reference – direct e.g. I brought a book and a pencil but broke <i>the pencil</i> later</li> <li>○ anaphoric reference – indirect e.g. I brought a book but <i>the pages</i> were missing</li> <li>○ cataphoric reference e.g. <i>The band</i> on stage is BTS</li> <li>○ sporadic reference e.g. I take <i>the train</i> to work everyday</li> <li>○ logical use e.g. <i>The last person</i> to leave will lock the door</li> <li>○ reference to body parts e.g. He hit me on <i>the head</i></li> </ul>		* refers to a class as represented by its typical specimen, e.g. <i>“The monkey is a curious animal”</i>
		* is used with nouns denoting nationality, e.g. <i>the Finns</i>
		* occurs with the fused-head construction of adjective and noun, e.g. <i>the rich and the poor</i>
* presupposes uniqueness (a count noun typically has only one unique entity to identify) although cf. “He married <i>the daughter</i> of the butler” (even though the butler may have more than one daughter)		

* presupposes existence of the entity of the referent to be identified; in a negative context <i>the</i> still entails existence, e.g. “He thinks it’s good to marry <i>the daughter</i> of the butler (although the butler doesn’t have a daughter)”		
* unique identifiability is achieved via totality for plural and non-count nouns; this totality is not as strong as a universal quantifier, e.g. <i>all</i>		
* refers to something presented as if familiar although without previous introduction, e.g. “Jalal sat on <i>the bus</i> , staring at <i>the empty house</i> and the life he was about to leave behind”		
	a/an	
* refers to something that is not uniquely identifiable in the shared knowledge of speaker and hearer; introduces a new specific entity into discourse e.g. “A <i>rock</i> dropped from the sky today”	<p>* creates non-specific reference, e.g. “He’s looking for <i>a wife</i>”</p> <p>* carries a descriptive role or classifies, usually non-quantitatively, e.g. “May is <i>a lousy singer</i>”</p>	* refers to any representative member of the class; cannot be used attributively to describe a whole class, e.g. “A <i>camel</i> can go without water for months” but “*A <i>camel</i> is becoming extinct”
* carries the quantitative meaning of “one”, e.g. “I have <i>a dog</i> and <i>a cat</i> ”	* is used with a proper noun to individualise each referent if there exist several bearing the same name; non-specific use, e.g. “She’ll be born on <i>a Friday</i> next year”	
* is used with a proper noun to individualise each referent if there exist	* is used with non-count nouns in certain set expressions, e.g.	

several bearing the same name; specific use, e.g. “Is there <i>a Mary Jackson</i> here?”	“The rain fell with <i>a vengeance</i> ”	
* is used with entities like continents, countries or cities to create an indefinite referent with an abstract or imagined quality, e.g. “ <i>A stronger Asia</i> will emerge from this crisis”. And also with humans, e.g. “They left, leaving <i>a puzzled Christine</i> at the door”		
* occurs with a proper name to be used as a metonym, e.g. “There was <i>a Carolina Herrera</i> among her dresses in the wardrobe”		
	zero	
* indicates neutralisation of article distinctions; sporadic use of <i>the</i> is so institutionalised that the article is dropped, as in: ○ meals e.g. What’s for <i>dinner</i> ? ○ institutions e.g. She goes to <i>church</i> sometimes ○ means of transport and communication e.g. I’m coming by <i>bus</i> . ○ times of the day e.g. At <i>night</i> they roam the earth ○ days, months and seasons e.g. Come and see me on <i>Monday</i> ○ accompanies a unique role or task e.g. Claire Jones is	* used as a plural counterpart of the indefinite article; the number and amount of the referent is indefinite, e.g. “There are <i>persimmons</i> in that box” * classifies plural nouns, e.g. “We are <i>singers</i> ”	* refers to the whole class, e.g. “ <i>Rainy days</i> make you sad”

<p><i>Professor of Nuclear Science</i> at Cambridge University.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ parallel structures e.g. He went from <i>door to door</i>, showing them his wares</li><li>○ block language e.g. <i>Singer</i> arrested for sex with <i>minor</i></li><li>○ vocatives e.g. You look great, <i>darling</i></li></ul>		
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## **Challenges and Importance of Teaching English as a Medium of Instruction in Thailand International College**

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### **Abstract**

This research investigated the views of lecturers regarding the challenges of teaching English as a medium of instruction (EMI) and its important impact on Thailand International College. A qualitative method was employed utilizing an interview protocol as a research instrument. In total, 12 lecturers from four programs of an international college were selected using a purposive sampling technique. Thematic analysis was applied to examine interview transcripts thus identifying common themes that came up repeatedly. The results revealed that there are four categories of challenges, namely, linguistic, cultural, structural, and identity-related (institutional) challenges and four important aspects of EMI implementation, namely, importance for language improvement, subject matter learning, career prospects, and internationalization strategy. Generally, lecturers found that their students can take notes, read academic texts, interact, and listen through EMI instruction. Taking all of this into consideration, this study provides suggestions for EMI to develop further in Thailand's higher education institutions as all the lecturers have voiced similar positive points on the importance of EMI implementation.

**Keywords:** challenges, content-based instruction, importance, medium of instruction

### **Introduction**

English has become a global language and teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) has increasingly become a universal demand. As reported by Macaro, Curle, Pun, An, and Dearden (2018), English as a medium of instruction (EMI) has become a growing global phenomenon, particularly in higher education. More and more higher education institutions are now keen to offer both undergraduate and postgraduate programs through the medium of English (Earls, 2016). The reasons for this are various and context-dependent. They include a perceived need to internalize the higher education institution (Knight, 2013) so that it is prestigious enough to attract foreign students due to falling enrollment numbers of local students through changing demographics, national cuts in higher education investment, the need of the public sector to compete with the private sector, and the status of

English as an international language (EIL), especially in the domain of research publications (Macaro et al., 2018).

Notwithstanding the above-mentioned, English has been formally adopted as an official language and the medium of communication among the participating countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nation (ASEAN) to foster collaborative activities towards accomplishing quality education in the region (Luanganggoon, Phantharakphong, Sae-Joo, & Huntula, 2018). Therefore, using EMI in Thai higher education institutions is a key mechanism to equip graduates with professional skills and English language proficiency (Phantharakphong, Sudathip, & Tang, 2019). This enables the Thai higher education to produce more competent graduates who are competitive in the ASEAN Economic Community and wider international market (Bunwirat, 2017). However, the Thailand Nation website indicates that Thailand is ranked 55<sup>th</sup> from a list of 60 countries on their English proficiency skills (<https://www.ajarn.com/ajarn-guests/why-is-english-so-poor-in-thailand>). This shows that Thailand is so far down the ladder of English proficiency even though Thai educational policy has emphasized the importance of the English language by employing native speakers to teach English throughout Thailand (Luanganggoon, 2020). Moreover, teaching English as a foreign language or second language (L2) has become an important issue and is very challenging (Jufri, Yusri, & Mantasiah, 2019). The development of English as EMI is of great interest to language policy researchers in an era of globalization and internationalization. Despite the recognition of some implementation problems and constraints, EMI has been widely introduced into various non-native English-speaking countries including Thailand (Luanganggoon, 2020).

English has evolved from being foreign language or L2 to the language of academic disciplines in tertiary education (Wanphet & Tantawy, 2018). A major outcome of international colleges particularly in Thailand in terms of internationalization is the adaptation of English as the EMI for all the study programs. Furthermore, English-medium domination is deeply rooted in social, economic, and technological development as well as in international communication due to the results of globalization noticed in more English-medium programs in higher education institutions (Doiz, Lasagabaster, & Sierra, 2013). This is further supported by Chapple (2015) who investigated the relationship between teaching quality of the EMI program and the learning barriers. Chapple found that understanding the lecturers' perspectives would contribute to the enhancement of the teaching practices and effectiveness of EMI. Using EMI in a university study program is a method to prepare an English-proficient labor force so as to help it compete in the global market as emphasized by Troudi (2009).

The teaching of English as a foreign language is always a challenging task. When it comes to the places where English serves a very limited purpose, it becomes more crucial and painstaking to teach and learn. The aim of EMI in this research is to develop students' English professional capability, increase their knowledge of different academic disciplines, and prepare them to take

part in the international community (Wanphet & Tantawy, 2018). In this context, English is considered an instrument rather than a subject. In other words, mastery of the English language is regarded as a by-product of attaining academic knowledge in content courses (Alfehaid, 2018). As a result, all the international colleges, as well as international programs of faculties in higher education institutions of Thailand, are using EMI as an internationalization strategy to implement their course curriculum. According to Taguchi (2014), EMI is used in many other countries as an internationalization strategy in higher education.

Lecturers have experienced great difficulty in making students understand the knowledge of the teaching content if the English language is their L2 (William Dharma Raja & Selvi, 2011). This is because L2 learners require conscious effort to learn it and the exposure to the English language is limited. This is a different case of learning their first language (L1) or mother tongue whereby they learn it easily due to the favorable environment and by the great amount of exposure to their L1 (Phantharakphong et al., 2019).

Choomthong (2014) found that Thai students are less proficient in English compared to other ASEAN member countries. Therefore, Thailand's higher education institution, in particular, is considered as the main mechanism to equip students with not only sufficient professional skills but also higher English language proficiency (Bunwirat & Chuaphalakit, 2016). Currently, Thai people continue to rush to international programs which use EMI to sharpen their English competence. However, criticisms continue to arise as the teaching and learning of English in Thailand's basic education has not been able to provide students with an adequate level of proficiency to speak and perform satisfactorily in international tests (Dumrongkiat, 2016).

Subsequently, a major outcome of Thailand International College is to adopt English as the EMI for all the study programs. For instance, lecturers of all the international colleges in Thailand are either Thai or foreigners who can use English for instruction and some of them are native speakers of English. The impact of English as seen in the international college context is a rapidly growing tendency for English to be adopted as the EMI, even when most of the population speaks Thai as their local language. The rapid spread of EMI does not imply immediate success but is fraught with difficulties and challenges. Along with the implementation of educational policies of Thailand international college that call for EMI, there is a belief that language learning will take place during content delivery in a second language (Rogier, 2012).

Since this research addresses the use of EMI within the international programs at Thailand international college, the adoption of English as a language for teaching academic content was, in essence, prompted by instrumental motivations. After several years of EMI implementation, this timely research sought to consider the effectiveness of this instructional approach through the learning and teaching experiences of students and lecturers. It is hoped that this research will contribute to the knowledge of the effects of EMI in higher education on language proficiency, particularly in

contexts where EMI is initiated in Thailand where the native language is not English. It is anticipated that the research results will lead to awareness and improved practices among lecturers in EMI environments that will be beneficial to the students in terms of English language learning in contexts where EMI aims to improve language proficiency.

### **Literature Review**

Past researchers examined several factors and provided an in-depth understanding of EMI outcomes. To carry out a systematic review, I (as the researcher) began with Spolsky's (2004) Language Policy Framework, challenges of EMI implementation, and past research review.

#### ***Spolsky's Language Policy Framework***

I have drawn on the stimuli of Spolsky's theory to analyze its relevance to current English language policy in Thailand to reach a conclusion as to whether, and if so, how these forces have motivated Thailand's English language policy. Spolsky (2009, p. 1) proposes that language policies at the national level are determined by four common and co-existing forces, namely, (i) national (or ethnic) ideology or claims of identity; (ii) the role of English as a global language; (iii) a nation's sociolinguistic situation; and (iv) increasing interest in linguistic rights within the human and civil rights framework.

National ideology and identity refer to the infrastructure of beliefs and principles relevant to a collective mind that may be apparent in language policy. In the context of Thailand's non-colonial past and the scarcity of an intra-functional role of English in the country (Suntornsawet, 2019), where Thai language as an official language assumes predominance in national and cultural identity (Spolsky, 2004).

The role of English is defined as the "tidal wave of English that is moving into almost every sociolinguistic repertoire" throughout the global language ecology (Spolsky, 2004, p. 220). Owing to English as the language of global communication, it has come to index a cosmopolitan social and economic mobility. Ytsma's (2000, p. 228) reference to the Netherland's emphatic prioritization of English as L2 of a language polity can seeve as a good example. However, the wave can also create tensions between linguistic internationalization and local language interests (May, 2014), meaning the tidal wave may also be resisted by the method of interferences to protect the prominence or vigor of local languages. For instance, the debate in Germany discloses a smoldering worry about English and debates arise about the marginalization of German (Phillipson, 2003, p. 80).

The sociolinguistic situation alluded above to "the number, and kinds of languages, the number and kinds of speakers of each, the communicative value of each language both inside and outside the community being studied" (Spolsky, 2004: 219). This is not just involved with the factual sociolinguistic



setting, but also with subjective perceptions about the significance of specific languages. However, it is crucial in language policy research not to accept any sociolinguistic situation *prima facie* because sociolinguistic arrangements may not be “inevitable or logical, but rather the result of political processes and ideologies of state formation” (Ricento 2006: 15). This is not to suggest that one should disengage oneself from the common force of Spolsky’s theory but rather focus on its interconnectedness with his three other forces, as well as the salience of examining language ideologies in language policy, given perceived and real sociolinguistic situations may be manifestations of socio-political arrangements and ideologies.

The final force of Spolsky’s theory (2004: 220) claims that there is an escalating global interest in “linguistic pluralism and an acceptance of the need to recognize the rights of individuals and groups to continue to use their languages”. Spolsky (2005) particularly elicits the international awareness of minority issues generated by the American civil rights movement and twentieth century international human rights instruments that establish and protect language minorities either explicitly or implicitly. Language is situated as an aspect of human rights, encouraging countries to offer language rights to their minorities in some manner, such as provisions for minority language-medium schooling (Spolsky 2004). This is certainly the case, for example, for speakers of Maori in New Zealand (May & Hill 2005) and French Canadians outside of Quebec (May 2014). Spolsky’s final force, therefore, predicts countries as inevitably concerned in creating and executing liberal language rights for their minorities.

### ***Challenges of EMI Implementation***

My literature review identifies four major EMI challenges facing lecturers, including students’ language abilities and proficiency, appropriate methods, and inadequate resources (Garcia, 2020). In a similar vein, Bradford (2016) proposed four categories of challenges found in EMI, namely linguistic challenges, cultural challenges, structural challenges, and identity-related (institutional) challenges.

Linguistic challenges are those related to language issues confronted by both lecturers and students involved in EMI programs. These issues are often encountered by non-native students as they struggle to understand the accented English of native lecturers (Ammon & McConnell, 2002) and they have difficulties to understand lecture content delivered in English in general (Hellekjær, 2010). On the other hand, students face many challenges in EMI, where they are unable to comprehend published academic literature in the English language because of their inadequate English proficiency. This, as reported by Wilkinson (2013) refers to Dutch students who have problems following EMI programs at Maastricht University because of their inadequate of English language proficiency. Overall, there is a general concern in the EMI literature, often attached to self-perception or touching on the basic

assumption, that students may fall short of possessing adequate English proficiency (Huang, 2015; Wächter, 2008). On the other hand, EMI lecturers are concerned about the linguistic challenge posed by the heterogeneity seen in the language proficiency among students. The main language-related challenge encountered by lecturers is their ability to deal with such diversity in addition to their mastery of the language itself.

Cultural challenge is defined as a mismatch between the characteristics and expectations of students outside the country and those from within (Bradford, 2016). The cultural challenges are highly influenced by the experience of EMI lecturers and teachers. For example, a lecturer from Britain might be accustomed to a teaching delivery style that is highly interactive while such a style is not considered the predominant dynamic in Thailand university classrooms where students prefer to be passive learners (King, 2013). According to Bradford (2016), some Japanese lecturers were feeling compelled to adjust their teaching style which in turn may affect the national ideology and the identity force of Spolsky's theory. This kind of cultural conflict is arguably less of a cultural challenge in which interactivity in local lecturers.

Another kind of cultural challenge is cultural anxiety around EMI and an associated perceived superiority of instruction in English to the detriment of local languages which seemed to occur particularly in countries that have experienced prior subjugation of domestic "minority" languages. For instance, the case of Flanders in Belgium, where Dutch was not recognized as an official language until 1930 and French dominated the scientific and cultural life for a century or more in that region (Splunder, 2010). While there may be little evidence that EMI, in fact, is as pernicious as some seem to fear (Coleman, 2006; Hu, 2009; Jenkins, 2013), the fear itself is indeed real and cannot be ignored.

Structural challenges in the EMI program were related to overall programmatic coherence and included issues related to an insufficient number of EMI courses and support staff cannot work with diverse populations (Bradford, 2016: 4). Several studies point to reluctance on the part of potential EMI lecturers due to lack of confidence related to an absence of training or a lack of financial incentive (Byun et al., 2011). Regarding the lack of confidence, there is an overlap with the linguistic challenge mentioned earlier, with a vicious circle of administrators and potential EMI lecturers assuming that very high proficiency levels are necessary to teach EMI courses, yet with little or no institutional assistance to attain such levels.

The identity-related (institutional) challenge is related to how the EMI program is perceived from outside and the identity of the EMI program, the lecturers who are teaching the EMI program, and the students' enrollment (Bradford, 2016: 12). Institutional identity, in particular, the preoccupation around how it is perceived by the rest of the world, for example in world rankings seems to be a growing concern among higher education institutions that wish to internationalize as a key driver of EMI policy (Knight, 2015).

Mastery of the English language is viewed as a by-product of obtaining academic knowledge in content subjects. As a result, EMI is used in Thailand as an internationalization strategy in higher education (Tang, 2019). On this line of reasoning, content-based instruction (CBI) is used as the conceptual mainstay by referring to instructional approaches that make a dual, though not necessarily an equal commitment to language and content learning objectives. Hence, content-based approaches support the speaker's L2 as the medium for content learning, and content is the resource for L2 learning (Kasper, 2000). CBI supports synergistic, rather than sequential, mastery of both content and language. This occurs when students are exposed to meaningful content-related discourse conveyed in L2.

If CBI is well implemented, it enables English as Foreign Language (EFL) students to develop sophisticated literacy and English academic skills such as reading, listening and taking notes, academic writing, and oral communication (Weimer, 2002). In content courses, students are required to think critically to direct questions as well as discuss synthesize and evaluate information. In keeping with Vygotsky's sociocultural theory on L2 acquisition, communicative competence is acquired while learning about specific subjects or courses, because students use their L2 to interact with peers and the lecturer (Stryker & Leaver, 1997). Similarly, in a content-based classroom, teacher-student interactions enhance students' language proficiency because the new academic register is delivered in L2 (Gibbons, 2003). As a result, these research outcomes could have a greater contribution to have a systematic analysis made by exploring the problems and challenges faced by lecturers. Hence, I wish to focus on the importance of EMI in the teaching and learning of international programs and its management strategies.

### ***Past Research Review***

Wächter and Maiworm (2014) conducted an extensive survey of EMI programs throughout Europe. They found that EMI programs are aimed to attract students from other countries, prepare students for mobility and a globalized labor market, and raise the profile and ranking position of the university. Macaro et al. (2017) conducted an in-depth review of 83 studies in higher education that documents the growth of EMI in different geographical areas. Macaro et al. concluded that key stakeholders have serious concerns regarding the introduction and implementation of EMI despite sometimes recognizing its inevitability. They also concluded that the research evidence to date is insufficient to assert that EMI benefits language learning nor that it is detrimental to content learning.

Kirkpatrick (2017) found that there has been a striking increase in the number of higher education institutions in the Asian Pacific region that are moving to offer courses and programs through EMI, particularly in Malaysia and Myanmar. However, Kirkpatrick argued that the move to implement EMI has been undertaken without adequate planning and preparation for lecturers

and students. In addition, Kirkpatrick (2017) urged everyone concerned to consider the possible implications of this move to EMI for lecturers and students and proposed that higher education institutions need to embrace an inclusive language education policy in adopting EMI courses. Kirkpatrick contended that higher education institutions that have adopted EMI policies and programs need to take into account the use of English as a lingua franca and to ensure that the policies identify and encourage bi/multilingualism in the higher education institution.

Dearden (2014) obtained information from 55 countries regarding EMI as a growing global phenomenon to map the size, shape, and future trends of EMI worldwide. A total of 60 countries' British Council staff were involved as informed respondents. Dearden's (2014) result showed that the general trend is moving towards the rapid expansion of EMI provision. Besides, Dearden reported that there is official governmental backing for EMI but with some interesting exceptions. Public opinion appeared not to wholeheartedly support EMI underlying the attitudes can be described as "equivocal" or "controversial" rather than being "against" its introduction and/or continued use. This is because of the potentially socially divisible nature of EMI whereby EMI is limited accessible by lower socio-economic groups and/or a fear that the L1 or national identity will be undermined by its prevalence.

Galloway (2017) investigated the effectiveness of using EMI in Japan and China's higher education institutions. Galloway stated that there is a mistaken view put forth both by Japan and China's governments who believe that EMI programs will improve higher education students' English proficiency, and therefore result in a workforce that there is more fluent in English. EMI is considered to provide a double benefit, namely knowledge of their course content and English language skills. Therefore, both governments and students think that this will make them more valuable in the global job market (Galloway, 2017). However, Galloway (2017) found that students understand more content when learning in their L1, compared to studying in English. Furthermore, lecturers believed EMI programs should only use English, but many also said that students' L1 could be used as a pedagogical tool with an EMI course. Lecturers seemed to regard EMI more as a method to teach the content, rather than as a tool for learning English.

The challenges of supporting quality EMI delivery in international colleges going by Dearden's (2014) research report are: (i) there is a shortage of linguistically qualified lecturers; (ii) there are no stated expectations of English language proficiency; (iii) there appear to be few organizational or pedagogical guidelines which might lead to ineffective EMI teaching and learning; and (iv) there is no EMI content in initial lecturer education preparation training programs as well as continuing professional development (in-service) courses.

Despite good planning, curriculum, textbooks, qualified lecturers, and effective administration, the teaching-learning process sometimes seems to be futile when the actual skill development is not up to the mark. At this juncture

we need to note that although our students spend a long time in language classes, they do not achieve a desirable level in various language skills and are not able to express themselves in simple English sentences. Due to the deficiencies that exist in their learning given that English is the language of EMI for core courses, the desired result cannot be achieved (Tang, 2019). Thus, it can be concluded that English in an EMI has a decorative aspect and it has no academic consequences if further investigation does not address solutions to the problems.

### **Research Questions**

Based on the literature review presented so far, I would like to analyze CBI by referring to instructional approaches that make a dual commitment to language, and content learning objectives. On this line of reasoning, the general objective of this research is to empirically investigate the assumption that language proficiency increases when content delivery takes place in English. It seeks to discover the challenges faced by the lecturers while they are using CBI to teach their EMI courses. This research then proposes the following research questions:

1. What are the challenges faced by lecturers in terms of language and content while they are teaching EMI courses, namely students' language proficiency and subject matter learning?
2. Why is EMI implementation important?

### **Method of study**

The target population of the current research is lecturers from four different departments within the International College at a university in Khon Kaen province, Thailand. This college was selected because it implements the policy of EMI in all its study programs. The purposeful sampling technique was employed in this qualitative research for the identification and selection of information-rich cases for the most effective use of limited resources (Patton, 2002). This involves identifying and selecting individuals that are especially knowledgeable or experienced with this phenomenon of interest (Cresswell & Plano Clark, 2011). In addition to knowledge and experience, Bernard (2002) noted the importance of availability and willingness to participate, and the ability to communicate experiences and opinions in an articulate, expressive, and reflective manner. In keeping with this, I contacted this college asking for permission to conduct the research and look for volunteers.

Focus group interview was used to collect high-quality data in a social context (Patton, 2002) which primarily helped me understand the specific challenges and the importance of EMI implementation from the viewpoint of the participants of research (Khan & Manderson, 1992). After considering the above circumstances, four cycles of focus group interviews were conducted

with 12 lecturers from four undergraduate programs in the international college, namely, Business Administration, International Affairs, Tourism Management, and Communication Arts. Three lecturers who came from each undergraduate program participated in the respective cycle of the semi-structured focus group interview. The 12 participants consisted of six foreign lecturers (English is their L1), two foreign lecturers (the Chinese language is their L1), and four local lecturers (the Thai language is their L1). Participants identified as R1 to R6 are the native speakers, R7 and R8 are from China, and R9 to R12 are local Thais. Table 1 shows the background of the participants.

Table 1  
*Background of the participants*

No. of Participant	Country of origin	EMI program	Teaching experience
R1	Canada	Business Administration	8 years
R2	French	Business Administration	5 years
R3	United States	Tourism Management	8 years
R4	United States	International Affairs	5 years
R5	United Kingdom	Communication Arts	7 years
R6	The Netherlands	International Affairs	4 years
R7	China	Tourism Management	4 years
R8	China	Tourism Management	4 years
R9	Thailand	Business Administration	4 years
R10	Thailand	Communication Arts	4 years
R11	Thailand	International Affair	3 years
R12	Thailand	Communication Arts	7 years

The research was approved by the university's Research Ethics Board. Participants were invited to indicate their willingness to participate in focus group interviews (Dawson, Dimitrov, Meadows, & Olsen, 2013). The duration of the focus group interview was one and a half hours. The interview guide included a series of probes and clarification questions to maintain consistency in questioning across participants. The focus group interviews were conducted using the English language. The interview questions were: (1) Within the EMI course, what are the perspectives from the lecturers on the effectiveness/outcomes of the EMI policy; (2) If any, what are their suggestions to increase the effectiveness of the EMI policy in the EMI course.

Specifically, the interview questions were about EMI aimed at investigating: (1) the lecturers' experience in EMI at the university level; (2) their beliefs about students' English improved when learning through EMI; (3) the indications of whether students' academic course learning was affected when learning through EMI; and (4) lecturers' views of the importance of using EMI in teaching and learning of higher education institutions.

The interview questions were checked for their validity and reliability by conducting a pilot study. To ensure maximum validity, I carried out a one-

to-one correspondence between interview questions asked and its underlying competency with four heads of the programs. Interviews were also conducted with one lecturer from each program who were not involved in the actual research. The results of the pilot study showed that the interview questions map to the specific competency and can be said that the interview data for that candidate is reliable and valid or consistent with the competencies deemed essential for the EMI implementation.

The interviews were audio-recorded and partially transcribed, and then coded using a thematic analysis approach (Miles & Huberman, 1994). During coding, key themes related to my research questions were identified, such as concrete examples of students' language proficiency and subject matter learning and also views of why EMI is important in teaching and learning of higher education institutions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). After the first round of coding, similar themes were grouped into larger categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The exact utterances representing each frequently occurring theme were then fully transcribed based on the audio recordings. An inductive approach was used by allowing the data to determine the themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). To ensure participant anonymity, participants' utterances are identified only by symbol R.

## **Results**

This section reports the recurring themes that emerged from the four focus group interviews. The initial result is the challenges faced by the lecturers while they are teaching EMI courses. This is followed by why EMI implementation is important.

### ***The Challenges Faced by Lecturers***

The results revealed that four categories of challenges, namely, linguistic, cultural, structural, and identity-related (institutional) challenges were identified.

#### ***Linguistic Challenges***

All the participants acknowledged that students are not at ease in writing content-based English reports but most of them do not have any difficulty taking notes in English. R7 claimed that students could not produce good content-based English reports because they were having a linguistic problem to understand the basic concepts. The following excerpt from R7 explicitly pointed out the linguistic challenges:

I found that my students could not understand the basic concepts thus they are not able to produce a good assignment and project report. Some of them just cut and paste from the website without carrying out the project. (R7)

In the same manner, when I asked about the impact of reading English vocabulary, R3, R5, R7, and R9 stated that their students learned a lot of new technical vocabulary during their teaching. However, R3 highlighted one of the most common linguistic challenges relating to students' apprehensions surrounding inadequacy of English proficiency, by students and even some Thai lecturers alike as revealed by the excerpt below:

I found that some students and even some Thai lecturers do not have a good command of English because of their environment failed to give them an opportunity to use the English language frequently. That is very challenging to me as I have to teach them technical vocabularies which they are not commonly used in their daily lives. (R3)

### *Cultural Challenges*

Results indicated that most of the participants agreed that their students do not have difficulty reading English textbooks and materials except participants from the Communication Arts program. R5, R10, and R12 who are from the Communication Arts program found that most of their students read English research papers by using Thai-English dictionaries to translate difficult linguistic or technical expressions. They can only understand the content to be approached in their L1, not English. The following excerpt from R5, R10, and R12 supported the results of students' reading skills based on EMI.

My students prefer reading in their L1 because it saves time, it is easier for them to understand, is more accessible without using dictionaries, is interesting, and is more enjoyable. (R5)

I think my students felt using L1 to understand the content is much more useful and easier. Even though I am a Thai lecturer and good in English reading skills, but I still prefer to read in the Thai language than the English language. Our students are not exceptional. (R10)

The majority of my students have specific language preferences while they are reading. They like to read their L1 reading materials. This is reflected when I asked them to do the literature review. Most of their references were derived from their L1 materials. (R12).



Notwithstanding the above-mentioned, results revealed that foreign lecturers have a different view compared to local Thai lecturers in terms of students' abilities in doing their assignments in English. Most of the students could not match foreign lecturers' expectations but they were able to match local Thai lecturers' expectations. The following excerpts from R1 and R9 explicitly pointed out the results of cultural challenges faced by students' academic writing.

Most of the students encountered difficulty in doing their assignment and writing content-based English reports. They used 'Google translate' to translate from their first language (Thai or Chinese) to the English language, depends on whether they are Thai students or Chinese students. (R1)

My students are having cultural anxiety to learn EMI course because the Thai language has been dominated their lives since they were born. (R9)

### *Structural Challenges*

Most of the participants appeared to face challenges about students' productive skills in academic writing based on EMI. R11 tried to use the Thai language to overcome students' academic writing problems. Nevertheless, R12 explained that the quality of the English language of his students use in the assignment or project report is not his concern while he is correcting their written work even though he is aware of EMI policy objectives. The following excerpts from two Thai lecturers R11 and R12 explicitly pointed out how they looked into the problems of students' productive skills of academic writing based on EMI.

The majority of my students seemed to be ok to take notes, do their assignment, and make the project report. However, for those who could not do it, I would explain in the Thai language to help them to understand before they started doing their assignment or project report. (R11)

I do not look at their English, I look at the technical terms and information. The quality of language is not my area of interest when I am correcting their written work. (R12)

All the foreign participants (R1 to R6) agreed that using English as the sole language of communication is their classroom practice. Moreover, the Chinese (R7, R8) and Thai (R9 to R12) participants claimed that there is no problem for students in asking and answering questions in English during class time and foreign participants (R1 to R6) stated that most of the students like to use their L1 to express themselves. While foreign participants feel comfortable using English when giving oral responses, and Thai participants prefer to use their L1 if possible.

I find my students feel more confident to speak in their L1 because they find difficulty in finding the right English words. (R5)

There might be some confusion if technical terms are translated into another language. (R11)

My students can explain what they need more using L1 because they have limited English vocabulary. (R10)

### *Identity-related (institutional) Challenges*

All the participants admitted that English interactional and listening skills are well implemented in the EMI classroom. The majority of the participants agreed that students can deliver oral presentations in English, and they always have peer interactions in their group work as required. Moreover, results revealed that foreign lecturers examine their own identities and place within their EMI implementation and how students struggle with issues of identity stemming from, for example, a lack of interaction between international and domestic students. Indeed, these issues have been reported by R1, R5, R9, and R12 as shown by the excerpts below:

I notice that my students' English grammar is not good, and they are afraid that they might use a wrong English word or mispronounce another. (R9)

All the books and materials are in English. It is more professional as all technical terms are in English and need to be discussed in English. (R5)

L1 is more advantageous as a channel of communication with my students. (R12)

My students told me that it is easier for them to discuss complicated materials in L1 and they told me that they cannot understand what I say. (R1)

### *The Importance of EMI Implementation*

All 12 participants agreed that EMI is important based on several reasons. In light of this, I categorized the results into four themes, namely importance for language improvement, the importance for subject matter learning, the importance for career prospects, and importance as an internationalization strategy.

### *Importance for Language Improvement*

According to R1 to R6, it is a desire or intention of international college or any higher education institution to improve English language learning skills and knowledge of a target culture. R6 mentioned that there is a great improvement in his students' academic English skills because he assigns students more written assignments to do. However, R5 indicated that students' English language skills are not well developed because students are not practicing the skills daily as illustrated by the excerpts below:

I found that EMI courses can develop our students' foreign communication skills, especially those students from China who are weak in English language communication skills. They really cannot gain knowledge of content if they do not develop their language learning skills. (R1)

I found that students' English language skills can be improved by giving them more assignments to do. They do improve as expected. The more they practice the better they will be. (R6)

An overall improvement must come from their daily practices. But our Thai students, particularly, are not using the English language other than listening to our teaching in the English language only. So, how can they improve? (R5)

Currently, we are in a multicultural society which makes EMI classroom as a natural environment for producing students who are proficient in more than one language. (R4)

### *Importance for Subject Matter Learning*

The results revealed that the importance of EMI to convey subject matter learning. R2 stated that students can maximize the subject integration opportunities as many of the reference books are written in English. However, R8 believed that most of her students are not at ease when she has a discussion with them about the subject matter. Sometimes students refrain themselves from asking questions related to the subject matter because they lack English-speaking skills as expressed below:

I noticed that students could maximize the subject integration opportunities if they are taught using EMI. (R2)

I found that my students do not want to ask questions during my discussion because they can compose their subject matter learning problems. They lack speaking ability. (R8)

### *Importance for Career Prospects*

The interview results showed that EMI implementation is important for career

prospects. For example, R3 and R8 pointed out that EMI implementation will open up possibilities for students to work and study abroad as well as spreading the country's own culture throughout the world as shown by the excerpts below:

This enables our students to study or work in a foreign language environment or international companies or oversea. (R3)

Not only international colleges in Thailand but also technical and vocational colleges with EMI to feed the workforce with English and professional skills. (R8)

#### *Importance as an Internationalization Strategy*

Finally, all the Thai participants (R9 to R12) stated that it is the political reasons for nation-building and aligning a country with English-speaking neighbors. The following excerpts from participants can help explain the importance of EMI implementation as an internationalization strategy:

As the main aim of the international college is resolutely proceeding with internationalization and making educational environments at higher education institutions that can compete with the best in the world, I am no doubt that EMI implementation is important. (R9)

Most of our students decided to join an international college with the desire to study abroad. Only EMI can provide opportunities to develop our students with the needed capabilities. Besides EMI implementation can cultivate our students' identity as Thais and spreading Thai culture to the world when they study abroad. (R10)

One of our major strengths in international college is introducing EMI so that it can attract foreign students to our faculty. (R11)

You can see that the Thai government decision is aimed at competing with the globalized world in the field of knowledge. This can be helped by implementing EMI in higher education institutions. (R12)

I think we should establish more international programs in teaching universities such as the Rajabhat Universities where all courses should be conducted in EMI. (R10)

#### **Discussion and Conclusion**

The results revealed an overview of the challenges and importance of teaching EMI courses that have been encountered in its implementation. The discussion turned to the current state of EMI in Thailand, specifically, reconsidering the global challenges presented earlier in light of local realities. Even though the results identified four challenges, namely linguistic, cultural, structural, and identity-related (institutional) challenges, there are some discrepancies of views in terms of linguistic challenges by comparing foreign and local Thai

participants. Most of the foreign participants concluded that their students' academic writing skills such as writing assignments and project reports were the most challenging skill that students failed to possess through EMI but local Thai lecturers seemed to have lower expectations in terms of students' academic writing abilities. This implies that the English competence of students is a reality that needs to improve, as emphasized by Macaro et al. (2018). This is supported by the results indicated that language improvement is one of the importance of EMI implementation.

All the participants agreed that students possess only the lowest level of academic writing, that is, taking notes in English. In addition to this, results revealed that code-switching was used by Thai lecturers to help students understand difficult aspects of the lesson as well as overcoming the cultural challenges. This result is in keeping with Galloway (2017) who found that students understand more content when learning in their L1, compared to studying in English. The use of code-switching can help students with lower performance to be able to follow the lessons better than using English only (Memory, Nkengbeza, & Liswaniso, 2018). Memory et al. (2018) stated that code-switching can reduce students' stress because when they can switch to L1, they do not have to worry about how to say it in English. While, such a position implies that as foreign lecturers are unable to translate into their L1, this tends to leave students with less understanding of subject-matter learning.

Notwithstanding the points voiced earlier, most of the participants felt positive regarding students' reading academic texts in English. They also concluded that using English-to-English dictionaries can improve students' reading vocabulary, and thereby is one of their coping strategies within EMI instruction. Yeh (2014) points to a similar result concerning the lecturers' perceptions of EMI on students' reading ability. The result is also supported by Chang's (2010) result. Chang found that lecturers' assigning English language reading tasks to their students can be an indicator to measure students' reading skills. Furthermore, the majority of the participants emphasized that their students preferred reading in their L1 if they are given a choice. Consequently, Bradford (2016) claimed that lecturers have to overcome structural challenges in providing evidence of equipping graduates with English language skills that they need for their study and future employment, and improved English language skills might be predictable with an increased exposure to EMI lectures. Ultimately, EMI implementation helps students' career prospects.

The current trend in Thailand is to attract more international students and increase the university ranking by integrating more EMI courses to globalize their institutions. As the results showed identity-related (institutional) challenges have to be taken into account to assist in internationalization strategy, it is hoped that the results of this research could shed more light on the current EMI courses and let more policymakers and lecturers know that encouraging Spolsky's (2004) Language Policy Framework is good for students in Thailand along with an appropriate

mechanism for professional training professional EMI lecturers also is necessary (Luanganggoon, 2020).

In light of all that I have said so far, I would like to consider what the likely trends and implications are for EMI in the future by investigating the importance of EMI implementation. Since all participants have similar and positive points on the importance of EMI implementation, future research should study the experiences of native speakers of English who cannot communicate at any operational level with their students (who have a different L1) or bilingual speaker who may not have near-native proficiency in English but knows the L1 of his/her students will perform better in conducting EMI courses as emphasized by Kirkpatrick (2017). The same argument may then arise in the EMI field with “imported” English native speaker lecturers and lecturers being highly valued and bumping out their locally produced counterparts.

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#### **Note on Contributor**

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**EFL Learners' Perceptions on Different Accents of English and (Non)Native English-Speaking Teachers in Pronunciation Teaching: A Case Study Through the Lens of English as an International Language**

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**Abstract**

Although Turkey is a country where English is taught as an international language (EIL), very few research studies have focused specifically on learners' attitudes toward different accents and pronunciations. Therefore, this paper attempts to highlight Turkish university preparatory school students' perceptions on different English pronunciations and accents and on native and non-native speakers' and teachers' English pronunciation. It also aims to point out the in-class/learning environment factors that impact pronunciation learning in English classes. Based on a review of the literature analyzing attitudes towards different pronunciation and accents, online surveys and focus group interviews with 10 volunteers were conducted to collect data for this study. The survey results revealed that a great number of participants believe that correct pronunciation is crucial in communication. Also, all the in-class/learning environment factors had significant impact on the participants' perceived pronunciation. Interview results indicated that most learners agreed that as long as a pronunciation is intelligible, it can be considered as good. In addition, despite admitting the positive effect of native English-speaking teachers (NESTs) on their pronunciation, most participants did not ignore the positive influence of non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs) on their pronunciation improvement. Because most participants indicated that they wanted to receive more pronunciation-focused instruction, this study has some implications for the institutions and material designers that may reconsider the weighing and variety of pronunciation practice when compared to other language skills.

**Keywords:** English as an International Language, pronunciation, accent, native English-speaking teachers, non-native English-speaking teachers

**Introduction**

Around the world, we witness a dramatic increase in the number of people who speak English as a foreign language, and it is not surprising that this rapid increase, over the past centuries, has changed the importance given to

language teaching in countries. Canagarajah (2007) underlined that the population of non-native English Speakers (NNES) outnumbered the number of people who use English as their sole communication tool, traditionally known as native English speakers (NESs). In short, as Widdowson (1994) points out, English is no longer the property of native speakers, but of everybody who speaks it.

According to Kachru's categorization of Three Concentric Circles of English (see, Kachru, 1985, 1988, 1992), Turkey is in the Expanding Circle since in Turkey, English has no historical and official status and it is taught to maintain different functions in different areas in the country and to be able to communicate on international platforms (Selvi, 2011). Kızıltepe (2000) illustrated that Turkish learners mostly learn English for instrumental purposes such as finding a job after university and using the Internet. Regarding the information given earlier and imaging the same scenario for all the countries belonging to the Expanding Circle, it is understandable that as the number of NNESs keeps increasing, the perceptions of the learners toward the language and its components will not be the same as noticed decades ago.

There is some evidence as to why we do not refer to only one standard, norm-providing and dominant English. Jenkins (2006) discusses the terms related to this issue such as World Englishes (WEs) – which she defines as “an umbrella term covering all varieties of English” (p. 159) or new varieties appearing in Kachru's Outer Circle. There is also the notion of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) which refers to - “any use of English among speakers of different first languages for whom English is the communicative medium of choice, and often the only option” (Seidlhofer, 2011, p. 7). Due to the prevalence of many terms defining different contexts, it may not be pedagogically appropriate to support the power of British, American, Australian or Canadian English (Kachru's Inner Circle speakers) as the best English in language classrooms, when we consider meaningful language use. In other words, in a globalized world, while it is being discussed that we no longer have Inner Circle countries' language norms, it may be worth our while to investigate how learners feel about this shift.

As this is the case for some time, beside all the language skills that have been discussed for many decades, learners' perceptions of different pronunciation and accent has been an area that still requires deeper investigation. However, there has been less investigation of pronunciation so far when compared to other skills such as grammar and writing (Bai & Yuan, 2018). Sifakis and Sougari (2005) mention how crucial this area is since without adequate pronunciation, learners may experience communication breakdown in oral communication which then results in a decrease of self-confidence in language learning.

Although some research in different countries and in Turkey has been carried out on the learners' perceptions on native and non-native teachers (Çelik, 2006; Demir, 2011; Koşar, 2018; Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2005; Şahin, 2005; Todd & Pojanapunya, 2009), few studies have investigated the Turkish

learners' perceptions toward English pronunciation and accent as well as in-class/learning environment factors influencing their own practice in class.

Therefore, this paper attempts to explore Turkish learners' attitudes toward pronunciation and accent of English, the factors influencing their attitudes as well as perceptions on native and non-native speakers/teacher through the lens of the status of World Englishes and ELF. More specifically, this study aims to contribute to this growing area of research by exploring if changing trends in English that we discussed earlier has had any effect on learners' perception of "good" or "bad" English pronunciation. In light of this, the main research questions addressed in this paper are:

1. How important are pronunciation and accent to Turkish EFL learners?
2. What are their perceptions toward native speakers' and non-native speakers' pronunciation in English?
3. What are the external factors that impact pronunciation or accent in learning English?
4. What are their perceptions toward native and non-native teachers in terms of improving their pronunciation in English?

## **Review of literature**

### ***Importance of Pronunciation and Accent***

Pronunciation, which has also been referred to as a "Cinderella area" by Kelly (1969) due to its complexity, has been ignored in language classrooms for a long time while it is one of the skills that is required to communicate with people speaking that foreign language as the language itself needs to be understandable for the listener. Otherwise, it is quite probable to witness communication breakdowns with unintelligible and ambiguous expressions. Moreover, as Morley (1998) points out, limited proficiency in pronunciation will lead learners to lose their self-confidence, which will definitely affect them negatively.

Particularly in Turkish contexts, learners experience great difficulties in acquiring English pronunciation due to their mother tongue effect (Demirezen, 2010) as in their mother tongue they pronounce each letter as it is. Among different perspectives of accent, in this study, accent will be accepted as "various types of speech patterning that all individuals possess when speaking a language" (p. 124) according to Ballard and Winke's (2017) interpretation of accent inspired by Derwing and Munro's (2009) definition. In short, pronunciation and accent will be used together and refer to very similar concepts.

A growing number of scholars (Derwing & Munro, 2009; Jenkins, 2006; Kachru, 1997; Levis, 2005) have underlined the significance of global intelligibility and have believed that intelligibility is more valuable than a particular native accent. More importantly, Jenkins (2000) is of the view that

NNESs do not need to sound like NESs, and rather than this approach, it is expected from them to speak the language by reflecting local linguistic and cultural identities. Levis (2005) links all these expectations to the classroom implications and underlines that pronunciation teaching should concentrate more on features that are crucial in understanding and focus less on those which are relatively “unhelpful” (p.371).

### ***Students’ Perceptions on Different Accents of English***

Although there have been relatively few studies on the perception of NNESs of different accents and pronunciations of English, some studies attempted to shed light on how EFL learners perceived different accents and pronunciation, and they have suggested that learners mostly held positive attitudes toward native-speaker accents and some of those studies have revealed that learners also had negative stereotypical attitudes toward NNES accents (Cenoz & Lecumberri, 1999; Hartshorn, 2013; Kim, 2008). In the Iranian context, Sa’d (2018) investigated perceptions of non-native English speakers toward accented speech in some part of his study. He found out that the participants perceived native-speaker accent quite positively, and that they had very clear negative attitudes as well as negative stereotypes toward non-native English speakers’ accent. The participants expressed that they wanted to sound similar to native speakers while speaking English since they considered them as “the best model of English accent”.

In a similar vein, Buckingham (2014) made an informed observation that Omani university students perceive pronunciation as an important component of English language, and that they prefer British and US accents and accept those as correct pronunciation due to the exposure of coursebooks presenting listening materials with British or US accents. This study is in keeping with a study conducted by Butler (2007), revealing that although the study did not find any significant difference in learners’ performance between American-accented English and Korean-accented English, it emerged that there were significant differences in learners’ attitudes toward both accents as they saw American accents as superior.

The studies of Yook and Lindemann (2013) in a Korean context and McKenzie (2008) in a Japanese context had similar results in terms of social attractiveness of the local accent (Korean and Japanese) as learners rated these local English accents most positively in terms of social attractiveness. However, in both studies, they demonstrated a clear preference for US and standard British English in terms of clarity and correctness when compared to their local English varieties.

Although studies note that EFL learners claim to prefer native speaker accents, they are not quite successful in differentiating those from non-native accents (Ladegaard, 1998; Timmis, 2002). In order to explain this contrast, Timmis (2002) states that learners rejected using the informal samples in the

study, probably because “those students who aspire to native-speaker spoken norms have an idealized notion of what these norms are” (p. 248).

### ***Native English-Speaking Teachers (NEST) and Non-native English-Speaking Teachers (NNEST)***

In his paper, Selvi (2011) explains how English has become a powerful tool used in almost every stage of a child’s education, in higher education and in people’s professional life. Therefore, it is quite an obvious reason why Turkey has become an attractive state for English language teachers both native and non-native.

Before delving into learners’ perceptions towards NESTs and NNESTs, it is crucial for us to define who the native and non-native-speaking teachers are. Although, there is an ongoing discussion to differentiate NESTs and NNESTs (Bonfiglio, 2010; Canagarajah, 1999; Davies, 1991; Medgyes, 1994), there is that one characteristic mentioned by Cook (1999) as “indisputable” in every definition made for native speakers and that is “the language learnt first” (p. 187). Saraceni (2015), in keeping with this differentiation, quotes Davies (2013) calling that characteristic as “unchangeable” (p. 175). Sharing the same view with him, in his chapter, Saraceni (2015) underlines that being born in the language and living with it does not guarantee the acquisition of some other language components such as fluency, creativity and ability to translate. These components change from speaker to speaker regardless of the fact that one is a native speaker or not. Alptekin (2002) supports the ideas mentioned above by stating that in contexts where we speak of WEs or ELF, language teachers should be successful “bilinguals with intercultural understanding and knowledge” (p. 63).

After discussing that the only “indisputable” and “unchangeable” characteristic of a native speaker is the language learnt first, in this study, NESTs are defined as English speakers who are born in the Inner Circle (Britain, the US, Australia and Canada) and, as expected, who acquire English as their L1. However, NNESTs are defined as speakers who are not born in an English-speaking country, in this context, Turkish teachers. These two definitions were made clear and carefully explained to the participant learners before they answered the questionnaire.

### ***Students’ Perceptions Toward NESTs and NNESTs Teaching Pronunciation***

Despite the ongoing discussions on ELF, WEs and the rapid increase of non-native English speakers especially in the Expanding Circle, this belief in native-speaker superiority is so much rooted among non-native language instructors that there are some recent studies that conclude even NNESTs perceive themselves as inferior in certain areas of English (Bernat, 2008; Ma, 2012; Rajagopalan, 2005; Suarez, 2000). There is no doubt that this feeling of

inferiority and the comparative evaluations by institutions will take some time to disappear with more awareness raising studies.

After the shift towards the communicative approach, in terms of pronunciation, intelligibility and functional communication have gained particular importance (Celce-Murcia, Brinton, & Goodwin, 1996). Considering this shift and recent definitions of NESTs and NNESTs and World Englishes, attaining a native-like pronunciation has lost its validity in the Inner and Expanding Circles. This change in learner goals is also pointed out in one of the fallacies mentioned in Kachru's (1996) work called *World Englishes: Agony and Ecstasy*. With these changes in mind, in order to make a contribution to the ongoing debate that focuses on strengths and weaknesses of NESTs and NNESTs, we need to use the lens of learners. More specifically, regarding accent and pronunciation, there are studies that conclude that learners prefer NESTs (Boyle, 1997; Coşkun, 2011; Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2002).

Noting some studies that stand in favor of NNESTs, Samimy and Brutt-Griffler (1999) mention that NNESTs can not only acquire linguistic competence that NESTs have but also, they can make contributions to a better learning environment by considering the needs of L2 learners more realistically. By the same token, Phillipson (1992) claims that NNESTs have experienced the complex process of learning a foreign language, as a result, they are aware of how the two languages differ and what the problematic parts may be during the learning process. In the same vein, Seidlhofer (1999) contends that having a control over the two languages can be seen as an advantage, and this should lead to "teacher's confidence not insecurity" (p. 238). Further to this, Medgyes (1992) proposes a list where NNESTs are more advantageous: being a good learner model for their students, because of being once a language learner, teaching the learning strategies effectively, being aware of the possible learning problems that learners may face and using learners' mother tongue as a helping tool. In short, in the literature, both groups have their strengths and weaknesses. Therefore, it is always better to see NNESTs as different, not deficit as mentioned in Cook's (1999) paper who further asserts as to why this comparison is not healthy by arguing that "people who speak differently from some arbitrary group are not speaking better or worse, just differently" (p. 194).

## **Method**

### ***Research Design and Procedure***

The current study is an explanatory mixed-method study as it collects data first from a quantitative research tool (an online survey) and then from a qualitative research tool (focus group interview) to refine and elaborate the quantitative findings (Creswell, 2012). In order to keep the variability among the participants as limited as possible, participants were selected through criterion



sampling. There was one criterion for them to be included in the study; which is to be placed in an intermediate level classroom after their performance during English tests in the first semester as perceptions towards different accents and pronunciations might differ according to learners' proficiency level.

As mentioned before, the data were gathered for this study in two sessions: First, a 39-item online survey was used with learners of eight intermediate level classrooms during their lesson time. The items of the questionnaire were gathered from different studies but the ultimate categorization regarding the item numbers was as follows: importance of pronunciation in communication (items 1-13), in-class/learning environment factors that influence pronunciation (items 14-22) and pronunciation/accent and (non-)native speakers (items 23-39). Descriptive statistics analyzing the data of this survey reported means, modes and standard deviations of the items.

Following the administration of the questionnaire, focus group interviews were arranged to investigate the data gathered from the survey. Because the interview was structured, and questions were preset, the themes were used: definition of good pronunciation, negative or positive effects of NESTs and NNESTs on learners' pronunciation and expected attitudes of English learners toward teaching of pronunciation in lessons. This study focused mainly on these themes as these were the most common focus areas of the studies conducted in the field of pronunciations and accents from the learners' perspective. The data of this interview sessions were audio-recorded and transcribed for further analysis.

### ***Participants and Context***

This study was conducted in a preparatory school of a foundation university located in Istanbul, Turkey. Minimum 70% of the course content in the faculties is implemented in English and learners are required to pass the courses to graduate from their programs; therefore, language teaching in the preparatory school of the institution has particular importance.

The participants in the survey were 169 intermediate level EFL students drawn from eight classrooms of the preparatory school of the institution described above. The focus group interview, which is the second phase of the study, targeted 10 voluntary students from the eight classrooms that took part in the online survey. They received an email asking if they would volunteer to participate in a follow-up interview for the research. The volunteers who responded to the email were complete strangers to each other. They were all placed in intermediate level classes after their performance in the first semester. All the participants shared Turkish language as their common mother tongue. The participants had language learning experience with NESTs and NNESTs in different times and contexts. The study was

conducted at a language preparatory program and the age of participants ranged from 18 to 20.

### ***Instrument***

Quantitative data were collected by means of a 39-item online survey which was collated from two different studies. Some of the survey items were adapted from Feyér (2012) and others from Lefkowitz and Hedgcock (2006). The categorization of the questionnaire items was done with reference to the study conducted in the Iranian setting by Sa'd (2018) who additionally investigated the identity issue in his paper. The questionnaire which was translated into Turkish was designed by a 5-point Likert scale items (1 - Strongly disagree, 2 - Disagree, 3 - Neutral, 4 - Agree, 5 - Strongly Agree), and learners were asked to respond to those items.

For the purpose of collecting qualitative data, we carried out a 40-minute interview with a focus group (see Appendix A) of 10 participants using structured interview questions. The interview session was conducted in learners' mother tongue in order to send the message that their use of the English language was not being tested, and that their ideas were valuable. The whole interview was audio-recorded and transcribed for analysis.

## **Results**

### ***Results of the Questionnaire***

Table 1 below provides the summary of descriptive results of the survey as mean, mode and standard deviation. All the 169 participants responded to all the items included in the questionnaire. It is apparent from this table that, in general, participants regarded pronunciation important in communication as the mode is 5 (strongly agree) and 4 (agree) except for the items 7, 8, 10 and 12 where they could not express their opinions either positive or negative. Those items are related to understanding different accents of English and feeling uncomfortable about them.

Notwithstanding the above-stated points, this table presents/notes that the overall response and tendency with regard to the second part of the questionnaire which investigated the in-class factors on their pronunciation were quite high with modes of 4 (agree) and the mean scores of each item. That means all the factors mentioned in the questionnaire have had a strong impact on learners' pronunciation.

The last part of the questionnaire illustrates the highest means and modes obtained for items 31 and 37. In other words, while participants strongly agree that it is acceptable to see English uses different accents around the world, they would like to sound like a person whose native language is English (inner circle citizens). With the lowest mean and mode, item 36, confirms to us that the participants do not judge a Turkish speaker speaking

English with a very strong Turkish accent, and that they do not show negative attitudes towards those speakers.

Table 1

*Descriptive statistics of questionnaire items*

Item No	N	Mean	Mode	Std. Deviation
Part 1: Importance of pronunciation in communication				
Item 1	169	4,23	5,00	0,91
Item 2	169	3,90	4,00	0,85
Item 3	169	3,99	4,00	0,93
Item 4	169	4,57	5,00	0,78
Item 5	169	4,07	4,00	0,86
Item 6	169	3,34	4,00	1,25
Item 7	169	3,11	3,00	0,99
Item 8	169	2,91	3,00	1,18
Item 9	169	3,24	4,00	1,17
Item 10	169	3,32	3,00	1,04
Item 11	169	3,38	4,00	1,04
Item 12	169	3,04	3,00	1,08
Item 13	169	3,79	4,00	1,09
Part 2: In-class/learning environment factors that influence pronunciation				
Item 14	169	3,75	4,00	1,06
Item 15	169	3,78	4,00	0,98
Item 16	169	3,98	4,00	0,98
Item 17	169	4,05	4,00	0,91
Item 18	169	3,87	4,00	0,93
Item 19	169	4,00	4,00	0,87
Item 20	169	3,78	4,00	1,03
Item 21	169	3,87	4,00	1,03
Item 22	169	3,77	4,00	1,01
Part 3: Pronunciation/accent and (non-)native speakers				
Item 23	169	3,91	4,00	0,95
Item 24	169	3,09	4,00	1,20
Item 25	169	4,08	4,00	0,86
Item 26	169	3,06	2,00	1,14
Item 27	169	2,99	2,00	1,17
Item 28	169	2,72	2,00	1,16
Item 29	169	2,79	2,00	1,15
Item 30	169	2,58	2,00	1,13
Item 31	169	4,28	5,00	0,94
Item 32	169	2,55	2,00	1,23
Item 33	169	2,71	2,00	1,19
Item 34	169	2,38	2,00	1,22
Item 35	169	2,16	2,00	1,12
Item 36	169	2,37	1,00	1,36

Item 37	169	4,09	5,00	1,09
Item 38	169	3,20	3,00	1,25
Item 39	169	3,33	4,00	1,17

*Importance of Pronunciation in Communication*

Table 2 below illustrates how important the participants consider pronunciation in communication in detail with related items and their percentages.

Table 2

*Importance of pronunciation in communication*

Statements	1 Strongly Disagree %	2 Disagree %	3 Neutral %	4 Agree %	5 Strongly Agree %
1. Pronunciation is important for communication.	0.6	6.5	9.4	36.5	<b>47.1</b>
2. I look up the pronunciation of words.	2.4	4.1	15.3	<b>57.6</b>	20.6
3. Good pronunciation is valued and encouraged in my English class.	2.4	4.7	14.7	<b>47.6</b>	30.6
4. If I have good pronunciation, I will be more confident in English.	0.6	3.5	3.5	22.9	<b>69.4</b>
5. I make an effort to have good English pronunciation.	1.8	2.4	15.9	<b>47.1</b>	32.9
6. I try to guess where a speaker is from based on their pronunciation.	8.2	19.4	24.1	<b>26.5</b>	21.8
7. I can understand different English accents and pronunciation.	4.1	22.9	<b>38.8</b>	25.9	8.2
8. It bothers me if someone's pronunciation is different from someone whose native language is English.	12.4	26.5	<b>28.8</b>	22.4	10.0

9. It is much better that English language learners learn English with a native accent.	8.2	20.0	25.3	<b>32.4</b>	14.1
10. I often hear English spoken by non-native speakers.	3.5	18.2	<b>34.7</b>	29.4	14.1
11. It is enough if I understand the gist of a text.	4.1	17.1	27.6	<b>38.8</b>	12.4
12. I can guess where a speaker is from based on their pronunciation.	8.2	22.9	<b>34.7</b>	25.3	8.8
13. I do not care about someone's pronunciation as long as I can understand.	4.1	8.8	20.6	<b>36.5</b>	30.0

As seen in Table 2, there are two items that have the highest agreement by the participants: items 1 and 4, which imply that most learners consider pronunciation important and good pronunciation makes them feel confident while speaking. In keeping with these two statements, items 2, 3, 5 are reported to be agreed by most of the participants. These items also reinforce the results that came out of the previously mentioned two items. Correct pronunciation of words and in-class encouragement are highly appreciated.

The results appear to suggest that learners do not believe that they can differentiate different accents and pronunciations easily as they expressed their uncertainty with items 7, 10 and 12. As regards item 6, although the percentage is the highest with “agree”, almost the same number of participants said that they did not try to guess speakers’ nationalities. And finally, in this part of the questionnaire, item 9 reveals that most participants would like to learn English with a native accent. However, the total number of participants who are either neutral or negative to this statement is greater. Additionally, items 8, 11 and 13 reveal that although the participants believe pronunciation is very important in communication, they do not regard it superior to the main idea of the speech. In other words, as long as the message of the speech is understandable, they do not pay attention to pronunciation.

#### *In-Class / Learning Environment Factors That Influence Pronunciation*

In this section of results, Table 3 illustrates whether pronunciation of participants is particularly influenced by in-class/learning environment factors such as teachers and peers.

Table 3

*In-class / learning environment factors that influence pronunciation*

Statements	1 Strongly Disagree %	2 Disagree %	3 Neutral %	4 Agree %	5 Strongly Agree %
14. My pronunciation in English sounds best when I am repeating after the teacher with the whole class.	4.1	8.8	20.0	<b>42.4</b>	24.7
15. My pronunciation in English sounds best when I am alone.	2.9	8.8	17.6	<b>48.8</b>	21.8
16. My pronunciation in English sounds best in the presence of both my instructor and my peers.	3.5	5.3	12.4	<b>47.6</b>	31.2
17. My pronunciation in English sounds best when I am reading from the textbook or a worksheet.	2.4	4.1	11.8	<b>49.4</b>	32.4
18. My pronunciation in English sounds best in the presence of peers/classmates whose pronunciation and oral skills are not quite as good as mine.	2.9	4.7	18.8	<b>49.4</b>	24.1
19. My pronunciation in English sounds best in the presence of peers/ classmates whom I do not know very well.	1.8	4.1	14.7	<b>51.2</b>	28.2
20. My pronunciation in English sounds best in the presence of peers/ classmates whom I know very well (i.e., friends and acquaintances).	4.7	7.1	17.1	<b>48.2</b>	22.9
21. My pronunciation in English sounds best in the presence of members of the opposite sex.	2.9	10.6	10.6	<b>48.2</b>	27.6
22. My pronunciation in English sounds best in the presence of members of the same sex.	2.9	10.6	15.9	<b>47.6</b>	22.9

It can be seen from the data in Table 3 that none of the items in this part illustrates a negative attitude towards the in-class / learning environment factors. In other words, this table appears to be a relatively stable one when compared to the other tables.

The participants strongly agreed on the statements suggesting that their instructors, peers who they (don't) know well or classroom members of the same or opposite sex influence their pronunciation positively since both "agree" and "strongly agree" responses make up the majority of the participant group. It may be worth noting that item 14 has the highest percentage with "neutral" comprising 20%, which means that there is a relatively big number of learners who question the efficiency of the use of choral repetition in class to improve pronunciation.

*Pronunciation/Accent and (Non)Native Speakers*

This section of the questionnaire required respondents to provide information on their attitudes toward different pronunciations or accents and NESs and NNEs and Table 4 illustrates the related results.

Table 4

*Pronunciation/accent and (non)native speakers*

Statements	1 Strongly Disagree %	2 Disagree %	3 Neutral %	4 Agree %	5 Strongly Agree %
23. I believe my English instructor's production provides me with an excellent model of native/native-like pronunciation.	2.4	5.9	18.2	<b>45.3</b>	28.2
24. Sometimes I feel uncomfortable trying to sound like a native speaker of English in the presence of peers/classmates whose pronunciation and oral skills are better than mine.	9.4	25.9	24.7	<b>26.5</b>	13.5
25. My pronunciation in English sounds best in the presence of native speakers of English.	1.2	5.3	10.6	<b>50.6</b>	32.4
26. Sometimes I feel uncomfortable trying to sound like a native speaker of English in the presence of classmates I do not know very well.	7.1	<b>28.2</b>	27.6	25.3	11.8
27. Sometimes I feel uncomfortable trying to sound like a native speaker of English in the presence of both my instructor and my peers.	10.6	<b>27.1</b>	25.3	<b>27.1</b>	10.0

28. Sometimes I feel uncomfortable trying to sound like a native speaker of English in the presence of peers/classmates whose pronunciation and oral skills are not quite as good as mine.	14.7	<b>32.9</b>	25.9	18.8	7.6
29. Sometimes I feel uncomfortable trying to sound like a native speaker of English in the presence of members of the opposite sex.	12.4	<b>34.1</b>	23.5	22.4	7.6
30. Sometimes I feel uncomfortable trying to sound like a native speaker of English in the presence of peers/classmates whom I know very well (i.e., friends and acquaintances).	18,2	<b>33.5</b>	25.3	17.6	5.3
31. It is very important for me to develop excellent pronunciation in English so that I can sound like a native speaker.	1.8	2.9	14.7	26.5	<b>54.1</b>
32. I sometimes cringe when my classmates sound very nonnative-like when they speak English and/or when they make little effort to sound English.	24.1	<b>29.4</b>	20.0	20.6	5.9
33. Occasionally. I deliberately avoid sounding like a native speaker of English.	16.5	<b>32.9</b>	21.2	22.4	7.1
34. It bothers me if someone speaks English with a Turkish accent.	28.2	<b>32.4</b>	19.4	12.9	7.1
35. It bothers me if someone speaks English with an accent other than Turkish accent.	33.5	<b>35.9</b>	14.7	12.9	2.9
36. I laugh inside when I hear somebody speak with a Turkish accent.	<b>34.7</b>	28.2	13.5	12.4	11.2
37. It is acceptable that learners of English have different pronunciations.	5.3	4.1	10.6	36.5	<b>43.5</b>
38. I think native speakers of English are the best model of the English accent.	10.0	20.6	<b>27.6</b>	22.9	18.8
39. I think we need to sound like native speakers of English when we speak English.	7.6	17.6	25.3	<b>32.9</b>	16.5

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If we try to subcategorize the items in Table 4, we can see that items 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29 and 30 investigate how the participants perceive their own pronunciation next to people with different pronunciations. More specifically, they demonstrate their preferences of trying to sound like a native speaker of English under different circumstances with different listeners. Interestingly, with the exception of item 25, the most dispersed results belong to this subcategory, and it is quite difficult to say that, although these are the highest ratings for each item, students have a strong preference of one specific response since the results are very close to each other.

In regard to item 24, although 26.5% of participants agreed that they felt uncomfortable trying to sound like a NES while they are with friends whose pronunciation skills are reportedly better than them, 25.9% of them disagreed with this statement. In response to item 25, a large number of respondents “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that their pronunciation sounded best when they were with NESs. It indicates that learners believed their pronunciation to be at its best when they are next to a native speaker of English.

Items 26 and 27 reveal very similar results considering participants’ pronunciation with classmates they do not know very well and with both their instructors and peers. These are the same and almost the same number of learners who agreed or disagreed with each of the two statements. When considering items 28, 29 and 30, most participants disagreed with the items suggesting that they felt uncomfortable trying to sound like a NES with classmates with lower pronunciation skills, members of opposite sex and with classmates they know well.

Another subcategorization relates to accepting different English accents and pronunciations, which includes items 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37. All the mentioned items, as we see in Table 4, reveal that learners are not biased against different pronunciations of English as they mostly “disagree” or “strongly disagree” with statements that have negative attitudes toward different accents (item 32, 33, 34, 35, 36) while they “agree” or “strongly agree” with the statement that they appreciate different accents and pronunciations of English (item 37).

Last but not least, although the results of item 38 and 39 are dispersed, they point to us that 27,6% of learners were neutral about the statement that tells NESs are the best model of English accent, but 32,9% of them expressed the need of sounding like a NES.

### ***Results of the Focus Group Interview***

#### *Definition of good pronunciation*

When the interviewees were asked to define good pronunciation, two divergent and often conflicting definitions emerged. The majority of the interviewees (70%) argued that good pronunciation is intelligible. If they can

understand what the person is saying, that means good pronunciation. One participant expressed his opinion as presented below:

I think good pronunciation should reflect a person's nationality, well, British or American, etc. I'm Turkish and we were not raised with this language (English). So being intelligible is the biggest factor.

The rest of the group (30%) indicated that good pronunciation is a British accent because "we can learn how to pronounce the words 'better' and 'correctly' from Oxford dictionary" and "English was born in Britain, so British accent is good and appropriate for learners". There was one participant who regarded the British accent superior because it sounded much better when compared to other accents.

#### *Effects of NESTs and NNESTs on learners' pronunciation*

In response to interview questions 2 and 4, which investigated the role of NESTs in Turkish learners of English, almost all the focus group participants, except two, 80% of the interviewees said that NESTs have positive effects on their pronunciation. Common expressions that came out of the data are "it's that teacher's mother tongue and s/he knows pronunciation better", "s/he can't speak Turkish, we will have to pronounce words correctly so that s/he understands us" and "NESTs are more relaxed while correcting our mistakes as they don't correct our pronunciation mistakes too much". These utterances illustrate a common view amongst interviewees which is that NESTs definitely influence learners' pronunciation positively. Also, as one interviewee believed that hearing the language in that (native) accent will surely influence their pronunciation positively as the learner will sound more similar to the NESTs.

Conversely, as mentioned before, one of the two participants who said that NESTs influence them negatively stated that when she pronounces English imperfectly, a listener who is also Turkish can understand what she means. According to her, it is acceptable to make pronunciation mistakes with her Turkish peers and teachers, however; it is not advisable with a native speaker. Similarly, the other respondent mentioned the negative impact of a NEST on his pronunciation by adding that a NEST does not know how difficult it is for us (Turkish learners) to learn pronunciation as s/he did not pass through the same paths as we do, but a NNEST knows the difficulties we have and teaches us pronunciation accordingly.

When the interviewees were asked question 3, if NNESTs influence their pronunciation negatively or positively, a majority agreed that they also had a positive impact. One common concept, just like mentioned in the "definition of good pronunciation" part, was uttered by the majority in this section, which was "*intelligibility*". Learners believed that NNESTs affect their pronunciation positively because they could understand their NNEST teachers and could follow the lesson easily. The reasons are because they "can

miss some parts in the lesson when a NEST is speaking although we (they) listen to him/her very carefully, but with a NNEST, we (they) don't" and they "can see that we (they) can also pronounce words correctly when we (they) see a NNEST speaking English correctly, they encourage and motivate us, we know that we can do it, too".

On the contrary, 3 participants disagreed with the ideas mentioned above saying that their NNESTs, in the past, taught some words with incorrect pronunciation and integrated Turkish words in their speech (although not fully pronunciation- related) and one of them expressed her opinion as follows:

... I had a teacher who pronounced "wilderness" as /waɪldərnəs / instead of /'wɪldərnəs/ and when I learned the correct pronunciation from a NEST, it was too late, I had already learned it incorrectly.

#### *Expected attitudes of English learners toward pronunciation teaching in lessons*

The results of interview question 5 revealed that none of the learners believed that current approaches to teaching pronunciation in a lesson are adequate. All the participants had different ideas on teaching pronunciation, and they agreed that teaching pronunciation should be more incorporated in lessons. If we combine similar responses, we see some common ideas coming from a total 10 participants. One idea is that they do not believe that pronunciation is practised enough explicitly.

Another idea came from quite a few participants, and it was about correction and feedback. They stated that they wanted to be corrected and shown the correct pronunciation immediately when they spoke. One of them suggested a way to do it by telling that "... Actually, it would be much better if they took notes while we speak so that they could guide us about the areas we can improve". One opinion coming from one participant was about the poor quality of pronunciation despite very long years spent learning English in primary and secondary schools.

### **Discussion**

The data in this study were collected in an attempt to shed light on the significance of pronunciation of Turkish learners, in-class factors that impact learners' pronunciation, their perceptions toward pronunciation of NES and NNESTs and their perception toward NESTs and NNESTs regarding improvement of their pronunciation. In order to investigate these issues, a 39-item-questionnaire and a focus group interview were designed for learners to respond.

The first part of the survey investigating the significance of pronunciation revealed that a great number of participants agree that pronunciation has a big importance in communication as well as correct

pronunciation, which is consistent with the results of Sa'd (2018). Although the learners stated they could not identify different accents and pronunciation, which lends support to the study conducted by Timmis (2002), almost half of the participants said they would like to have a native accent while the rest remained neutral or in disagreement with this statement. This mismatch was also found in the study conducted by Scales, Wennerstrom, Richard and Wu (2006).

After analyzing data related to the in-class/learning environment factors influencing learners' pronunciation, it could be confirmed that all the mentioned factors, including peers, teachers, teacher pronunciation teaching activities, had high impact on the participants' perceived pronunciation. They said they were affected by their teachers, same sex / opposite sex-peers, and peers with different proficiency levels, and while repeating with the class and reading words from the books and worksheet. Explicit pronunciation received from the teacher appears to have prompted appreciation and it is seen to be significant for the learners. This corroborates with previous results mentioned by Saito (2011) who noted that explicit phonetic instruction and repetitive practice improved learners' pronunciation.

When subjects' perceptions toward pronunciation of NES and NNES were analyzed, we found that there is no significant result in terms of their self-perceptions of pronunciations with people who have different proficiency levels of English as the results are quite dispersed with the exception of only one instance. They believed their pronunciation was at its the best when they were with a NES. In their context, a NES is usually a NEST. Thus, this finding will be referred further in our discussion.

Interestingly, there is a very strong finding that reveals learners are not biased against different pronunciations and accents, and they accept them as they are. These findings are promising and encouraging when considering English as an International Language and the principles World Englishes. Contrary to numerous studies presenting results where learners show preference to standard English (Buckingham, 2015; Butler, 2007; McKenzie, 2008), this study demonstrated that in this particular case, native accents were not the most favored ones.

It is also striking that learners could not decide if NESs are the best models of English as half of the participants said that they wanted to sound like a NES. These findings also reflect what literature says regarding accent identification and preferences.

Taking into consideration the interview results, the majority of responses received for the first question emphasize the importance of pronunciation as long as it is intelligible and understandable by either a native or non-native speaker. These findings concur with what Çakır and Baytar (2014), Pourhosein Gilakjani (2012) underscored in their studies along with Morley (1991), who specifically stated that "intelligible pronunciation is an essential component of communication competence" (p. 488). In particular, mutual intelligibility has a primary role to play between speakers and listeners

from the angle of World Englishes (Kang, 2010). As emphasized by two proponents of World Englishes such as Kachru (1997) and Jenkins (2000, 2006), we believe that this result reflects how significant is intelligibility when compared to a particular native accent.

Questions investigating how NESTs and NNESTs affect learners' pronunciation deeper acknowledge that a majority of learners believe NESTs have a positive impact on their pronunciation. As in seen the literature, it is also underscored that language learners find NESTs stronger in teaching pronunciation when compared to NNESTs (Coşkun, 2013; Milambiling, 1999; Sung & Poole, 2016) because: they can hear correct pronunciation from NESTs (Dweik & Al-Barghouthi, 2014; Torres, 2004), they have to speak in English as NESTs cannot use their mother tongue (Andrews, 2007), and they find NESTs less strict and more relaxed during speaking lessons (Medgyes, 1992; Üstünoğlu, 2007).

While admitting the positive effect of NESTs on their pronunciation, most learners did not reject the positive influence of NNESTs on their pronunciation improvement. Although very few criticized NNESTs' "incorrect" and "non-authentic" English pronunciation just like Chang (2016) illustrated, they said they appreciate NNESTs as they know how difficult it is to learn a new language, and this reflects what Dweik and Al-Barghouthi (2014) and Gurkan and Yuksel (2012) have demonstrated in the results of their studies

In short, both groups of teachers received positive comments addressing their different strengths, which tallies with what Moussu (2002) and Cheung and Braine (2007) have discovered after investigating perceptions of university students. Just as Medgyes (1994) highlighted different strengths of both groups of teachers by stating they are just "two different species" (p. 25), it is not quite acceptable to see one group as superior to the other in a world where native speakerism is not promoted as before. As Tong and Cheng (2006) conclude, both NNEST and NNEST groups should be treated and respected equally.

Last but not least, learners expressed that they wanted to concentrate on pronunciation more in lessons by suggesting need for different error correction techniques.

## Conclusion

The findings of our study have important implications for language teachers about their in-class practices. Although this specific group of participants was not biased against different accents and pronunciations, teachers need to introduce not only British and American but more pronunciation models so that learners can hear, compare, and analyze different varieties of English. This approach will definitely refer to intelligibility and will increase "communicative flexibility and respect for accent diversity" (Scales et al., 2006).

Our study has also some implications for materials designers and institutional language curriculum. When considering the listening activities in these learners' coursebooks, *New Language Leader* and *Pathways* are the most frequently used coursebooks in that institution. Even though the books use very few listening tracks with different varieties of English such as Indian or Spanish, learners are mostly exposed to standard English instruction with British or American English. The in-house listening materials are recorded by both NESTs and NNESTs, which are in consonance with WEs and ELF perspectives. However, these efforts may not be enough. As Buckingham (2014) suggests in her conclusion, we need to expose learners with more didactic materials that will help them appreciate other accents and pronunciations by referring to similar implications (Jenkins, 2005; Lindemann & Subtirelu, 2013).

As all the learners indicated that they wanted to receive more pronunciation-focused instruction, the institutions may reconsider their curriculum and weekly syllabus to see how much space is allocated to pronunciation given that this study suggests that learners are quite eager and enthusiastic about practising pronunciation. Since learners had different "ideal" error-correction techniques with some favoring immediate feedback, while some favoring more relaxed attitude toward correcting pronunciation errors, further investigation on this issue can be carried out to see how/if the feedback given to the learners can actually match with what they expect in reality.

This study, to our knowledge, is the first study investigating two crucial areas in one study from EIL's perspective: Learners' attitudes towards different accents and pronunciations and towards (non)native English-speaking teachers in pronunciation teaching with young adults in the language preparatory school of a foundation university in Turkish context. Although, a mixed-method approach was used to increase the validity of the findings, there is a need for further research to be done in a similar context with university preparatory school learners with intermediate level of English proficiency. Hopefully, this study will inspire many teachers who want to make their learners "more aware" of other English accents and pronunciations.

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## **Changing Contours: The Interference of the Mother Tongue on English Speaking Sylheti Bengali**

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### **Abstract**

The Sylheti Bangla, a variety of Bangla language is primarily spoken in the Sylhet District of Bangladesh, Barak Valley of Assam, Tripura, especially in North Tripura. The systematic perusal on English spoken by Sylheti Bangla speakers demonstrates that it carries a huge difference with English (RP) specially in respect to pronunciation, syllable structure, stress, intonation. The disparities between Sylheti English and English (RP) are because of a number of divergent variances between Sylheti Bangla and English which often makes the acquisition of English an arduous job for the Sylheti speakers. The errors committed by Sylheti speakers during their speaking in English can be attributed to the interference of the rule of mother tongue in learning the second language. This interference can be of phonological, morphological and sentence structure. However, the domain of this paper is exclusive to phonological interference of L1 on L2 through the contrastive analysis of the phonological aspects of Sylheti Bangla and English (RP). This paper intends to improve the status of English teaching-learning process compared to contemporary practices. Thus, it aspires to contribute to the theory of second language acquisition with a particular focus on learning English by the Sylheti speakers.

**Keywords:** Mother tongue interference, Sylheti English, phonological interference, contrastive analysis

### **Introduction**

All languages have their own patterns of linguistic system and the nature of this system differs from one another. Due to this variety of patterns in linguistic system, when a learner consciously begins the process of learning a second language or a foreign language, the distinctiveness of the second language in terms of its properties with that of the mother tongue of the speaker inhibits the process of his/her acquisition of the second language disregarding his/her consciousness of the intrinsic differences between the

two. This interference impels the learners of the second language to attempt to change the system of the target language in order to match it to their own language.

When a learner's native language affects the learning of second/foreign language, it is called interference of mother tongue (Thyab, 2016). In Dulay and Burt (1976, p. 71), the term 'interference' is defined as "the automatic transfer, due to habit of the surface structure of the first language onto the surface of the target language" (cited in Lott, 1983, p. 257). According to Lott (1983), interference refers to the errors committed by learners of second or foreign language that "can be traced back to the mother tongue". At the phonological ground, this interference is most prominent. It is because most of the phonological aspects are language specific. The concept of "transfer" can be best understood from Ellis (1994). He comments that L1 transfer usually refers to the "incorporation of features of the L1 into the knowledge system of the L2 that the learner is trying to build" (Ellis, 1994, p. 28). The behavioristic approach proposes that in learning L2 speakers transfer the "habit" of the L1 into L2.

So, from the above definitions of interference, it is understood that interference is the transfer of the grammar of the first language upon the target language of the grammar. If the target language is different from L1, this transfer results into interference or negative transfer; on the contrary, if L1 and L2 are similar, positive transfer occurs. Thus, the transfer of L1 can both facilitate and hinder the learning process of L2. In order to obtain a clear concept of the role of L1 in learning L2, I refer to the work of Hayati (1997). He mentions that when there are more differences between first language and target language, learners face more difficulties to learn it. On the contrary, if the two languages share more similarities, the learning of second language becomes easier for learners. Due to this reason, people can learn some languages more easily than other languages. For example, the acquisition of Hindi is easier for a Bengali speaker than the acquisition of English language. It is because Bangla and Hindi have many identical forms in respect of linguistic features. If the learners' mother tongue and target language belong to same language family, it makes the learning process of target language easy for learners and vice versa.

Many previous works uphold that the application of Contrastive Analysis (CA) methodology between L1 and L2 helps to predict the reasons behind the errors made by second language learners. The emergence of CA in second/foreign language teaching primarily engendered in Fries (1945). In his work, it is stated that "the most effective materials are those that are based upon a scientific description of the language to be learned, carefully compared with a parallel description of the native language of the learners" (cited in Dulay, Burt, & Krashen, 1982, p. 98).

According to Dulay et al. (1982, p. 97), "[c]ontrastive Analysis took the position that a learner's first language "interferes" with his or her acquisition of a second language, and it therefore comprises the major obstacle

to successful mastery of the new language”. Brown (2007) states that the CA is rooted in behavioristic and structural approaches. In his book, the concept of Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis refers to the idea that,

the principal barrier to second language acquisition is the interference of the first language system with the second language system and that a scientific, structural analysis of the two languages in question would yield a taxonomy of linguistic contrasts between them which in turn would enable linguists and language teacher to predict the differences a learner would encounter. (Brown, 2007, p. 220)

Based on such aforementioned works on CA, it can be stated that CA is a methodology which can be applied to explore the areas of difficulties faced by L2 learners and provide guidelines for the students, teachers, L2 material planners to plan language learning and teaching lesson plan.

The systematic perusal of English spoken by Sylheti speakers exhibits that it carries a huge difference with English (RP) with respect to a number of linguistic attributes especially in pronunciation, syllable structure, stress, and intonation. Due to these divergent variances, the acquisition of English has always been an arduous job for the Sylheti speakers. This almost always leads to a lot of flaws and gaffes. These errors, for the most part, can be attributed to the interference of the rule of mother tongue in learning the second language. Based on the methodology of Contrastive Analysis, in this paper, I attempt to demonstrate the differences between Sylheti Bangla (henceforth, SHB) vis-a-vis that of English (RP) with respect to phonology. The contrastive analysis throws significant light on the reasons behind the errors committed by Sylheti learners of English, and it will help us to get an empirical profile of the Interlanguage (i.e. IL) phonology of Sylheti English (henceforth, SHE), a variety of English spoken by Sylheti speakers. This will unequivocally help them to attenuate the gap between Sylheti English and English (RP).

The study examined some basic phonological aspects of SHB such as segments, syllable, stress, and intonation, and evaluated the interference of mother tongue in Sylheti learners of English. The findings will contribute to the theory of second language acquisition with a particular focus on learning English by the Sylheti speakers.

### **Literature review**

Though a substantive number of researches has been done on the interference of first language in learning second language, not a single work is available in the literature on the interference of Sylheti Bangla in learning English. Therefore, it would be a novel approach to discuss some previous works based on the interference of L1 on L2 with regard to some other languages in order to grasp a clear view of the concept of “interference” and the methodology of Contrastive Analysis. Keeping this in mind, in this section, I will cite some

previous works on the interference of L1 on L2. These citations will also help me to understand the fact that the interference of mother tongue in learning second language is a very common phenomenon in second language acquisition, and the English spoken by Sylheti speakers is also not devoid of this interference.

The first work which I refer to is of Derakshan and Karimi (2015). After reviewing some previous works they establish the fact that second language learners always face some problems in learning second language because of transfer of first language on target language. In their opinion, a lot of factors work behind this interference. For example, whether the structure of two languages is similar or different from each other, and existing knowledge of the learners. They propose that if L1 and L2 are similar in structures, L2 learners encounter less difficulty in learning L2. On the contrary, if L1 and L2 differ from each other in structures, learners face many problems in the acquisition of L2.

The research work of Malana (2018) examines how Ilocanos, Ibanags and Itawes use their own mother tongue in learning English. Ilocanos have the tendencies of transferring rules or patterns of intonation from their L1 in learning L2. For that reason they commit more errors while they communicate in English. The Ibanags tend to transfer the L1 pronunciation rule to L2. That is why they commit errors on pronunciation. The author investigates that when speaking in a target language code-shifting and code-switching are tendencies of L2 learners like the Ilacano, the Ibang, and the Itawes. The learners use these strategies when they find it difficult to proceed with a learning task in L2.

Another significant study on L1 transfer in the acquisition of L2 is Radhika (2014). This work examines the mother tongue interference on learning spoken English by the learners coming from Tamil, Telugu, Hindi, and Bhojpuri languages. The author investigates that when Tamil learners of English pronounce the voiced and voiceless plosives /p/ and /b/ they confront difficulty and mother tongue interference occurs in their English. They pronounce /pin/ and /bin/ alike. The reason behind this is that there is no exact letter for each sound in Tamil. One letter can be used for three sounds. For instance, for “pa”, “ba”, pHa”, “bHa” Tamil speakers use one letter “pa”. Telugu students pronounce English words end with the vowel sound /u/ e.g., “girl” is pronounced as “girlu”. Explaining the reason behind it the author mentions that in Telugu most of the words end with the vowel sound /u/ like “kooralu”, and “bommalu”. Now coming to Bhojpuri, the author investigates that Bhojpuri students shorten the long vowel sounds and pronounce nasal sounds such as consonant sounds. Bhojpuri students pronounce “Rajeev” as “Rajv” because the long vowel sounds are not found in Bhojpuri language.

Also, Hu (2015) states that English is difficult for Chinese learners. It is because Chinese and English have different language structures. English is part of Indo-European language family, on the other hand, Chinese is part of the Sino-Tibetan language family. Due to the significant differences between



Chinese and English many Chinese English learners rely on their mother tongue while they try to learn new languages. His research proposes that Chinese English learners encounter difficulty to pronounce English sounds because their similar Chinese sounds influence a lot. For example, Chinese students can not differentiate the distinction between the alveolar nasal sound /n/ and the alveolar liquid lateral sound /l/. As a result, they mispronounce “knife” and “life” as well as “need” and “lead”. Chinese learners face difficulty to pronounce words like “English” and “rose” correctly because English sounds /r/ and /s/ differ from Chinese /r/ and /s/.

While examining Bengali speakers, Saha and Mandal (2014) reveal that Bengali English learners encounter difficulty to pronounce some American English consonant and vowel sounds. As a consequence, they make error in pronouncing the vowels and consonants of American English. This paper proposes that as Bengali Speakers face problem with American English consonants and vowel sounds, they try to replace these sounds by the similar sounds of their mother tongue Bengali. His research shows that Bengali speakers replace American English consonants such as /f/, /v/, /T/, /D/, /z/ by /pH/, /bH/, /tH/, /dH/, /dZ/ respectively, and vowels such as /e/ and /E/ are transferred to /e/, /u/ respectively, and /uè/ becomes /u/.

The work of Thyab (2016) also provides the interferences of mother tongue in second language learning by Arab speakers. His work shows that the article system, especially the notion of definite and indefinite article is different in Arab than that of the English language. As a result, Arab learners of English face problems in the correct use of articles in English language.

Ullah (2011) also deals with the interference of L1 on L2. He claims that the errors committed by learners in learning second language are the result of the transfer of L1 on L2. He investigates the differences of consonants between English and Pashto language. Their work finds that English consonant sounds which are not present in Pashto create problems for the Pashtan learners of English such as English sounds /t/, /v/, and /z/.

Like Thyab (2011), Crompton (2011) also reveals that how Arabic learners of English face problems in using English article correctly due to the transfer of L1 article system on L2. Das (2001) shows how Tripura Bangla speakers in their use of English language get deviated from the stress pattern of English because of the interference of the core pattern of the first language on English.

### **A background study of Bangla language and Sylheti Bangla**

From the celebrated work of Chatterjee (1926), it is known that Bangla originated from Indo-Aryan (IA) or the Indic Sub-branch of the Indo-Iranian branch of the Indo-European (IE) language family. Commenting on the Bangla language, Gope (2016) claims that in India, Bangla is the second most spoken language (behind Hindu and Urdu).

Sylheti dialect belongs to eastern variations of Bangla. The origin of

Sylheti dialect presented in Anowar (2013) is stated below.

Indo-European>Indo-Iranian>Indo-Aryan>Eastern group>Bangali-Assamese>Sylhet.

This dialect is primarily spoken in the Sylhet District of Bangladesh, also known as Surma valley. Sylhet district is located in the North-Eastern region of Bangladesh. It has five divisions Sylhet, Habiganj, Maulavi Bazar and Sunamganj. Apart from Bangladesh, this dialect is also spoken in the North parts of Tripura, Barak Valley of Assam, and some parts of Meghalaya.

Anowar (2013) claims that Sylheti has its own script known as “Sylheti Nagari”. In Bangladesh during Afgan reign “Sylheti Nagari” was used for the print of Afgan coin. Sylheti Nagari has similarity with Kaithi alphabet. However, this dialect varies from Standard Colloquial Bangla in terms of linguistic aspects.

### **Methodology**

Data were collected from native speakers (approximately 20, 10 males and 10 females and aged between 11-15 years of age) of SHB. The speakers were the students of primary school of vernacular medium. They grew up in and around Dharmanagar district of North Tripura where SHB is spoken. For the examination of segments, syllable pattern and stress, a list of English words was given to them to read out. For the intonation part, the speakers were asked to produce both Sylheti and English scripted sentences. The data were recorded into a Samson CUIU PRO USB microphone attached to a laptop. The recordings were made in Audacity software in Praat (Boersma and Weenink, 2019). Recorded sentences were saved in Praat and segmented manually. In order to analyze the data for intonation, 2 tier Praat Textgrid file was created. In the first tier, the divisions of the words of the sentences were shown, and in the second tier, the pitch contour of the sentence was shown. The speakers were asked to repeat each sentence three times. In a quiet environment, the recordings were made. It is pertinent to mention that the present researcher herself is a native speaker of SHB. First, the data have been collected, verified and then cross-checked with the researcher’s native language’s knowledge and intuition. The data collected from the native speaker-informants along with the perception and judgement of the native speaker-researcher has been the mainstay of the work.

## Results

### *Phonological aspects of SHB*

In this section, I will outline the nature of the basic phonological properties of SHB such as segments, syllable, stress, and intonation. The delineation can be started off with a brief account of these phonological aspects.

Speech sounds are classified into consonants and vowels. Phonetically consonant sounds are defined as sounds “made by a closure or narrowing in the vocal tract so that the airflow is either completely blocked, or so restricted that audible friction is produced” (Crystal, 2008, p. 103). Based on the manner of articulation consonants are divided into two parts — obstruents and sonorants. During the production of obstruents, “the airflow is noticeably restricted, with the articulator either in complete closure or close approximation”, on the other hand, in the case of sonorants “either there is no such restriction in oral tract, or the nasal tract is open; either way the air has free passage through the vocal tract” (Davenport & Hannahs, 2005, p. 18). Depending on the stricture type, obstruents have three classifications — stops, fricatives, and affricates. The subdivisions of sonorants are nasals, liquids, and glides. The contact of active and passive articulators completely closes the oral tract and this closure is suddenly released during the production of stops. Due to this closure, the flow of air can not escape from the mouth. If a voiceless stop begins the word, during its articulation air is released with an “audible puff”. This phenomenon is termed as aspiration. For example, in the case of English sound /pʌi/ “pie”, /p/ is an aspirated sound. With regard to the production of fricatives, active and passive articulators make contact in such a way that there is a narrow gap between the articulators which allow the airflow to exit from the passage of the mouth. In the words of Davenport and Hannahs (2005, p. 27), “fricatives are produced when the active articulator is close to, but not actually in contact with the passive articulator”. In the articulation of affricates, the articulators create complete closure like plosives but in the case of release they follow fricatives as the release is very slow. So affricates possess the nature of both plosives and fricatives. In Crystal (2008, p. 16), the affricates are defined in the following way:

when the air-pressure behind a complete closure in the vocal tract is gradually released; the initial release produces a plosive, but the separation which follows is sufficiently slow to produce audible friction, and there is thus a fricative element in the sound also.

When the air passes through nasal cavity, nasal sounds are produced whereas, liquid sounds are produced with “unhindered airflow”. Like vowel sounds, in the case of articulation of glides, there is no contact of the active and passive articulator. But their nature is like consonants as they cannot form syllable nuclei; they appear at the edge of the syllable.

During the articulation of vowel sounds due to the wide gap between

articulators the airflow exit without any obstruction. Vowels can be divided into monophthongs, diphthongs, and triphthongs. In the case of monophthongs, there is no tongue movement, whereas diphthongs involve tongue movement during its production. In Crystal (2008, p. 311) monophthongs are defined as pure vowels “where there is no detectable change in quality during a syllable”, and diphthongs or triphthongs refer to the vowels change in quality. Diphthongs can be again subdivided based on their ending vowel – fronting, centering and backing diphthongs. In the case of fronting diphthongs, the tongue glides towards the front vowel, when this glide is towards the centre vowel, it is called centering diphthongs; whereas, in the case of backing diphthongs, tongue movement ends in the back vowel.

In a language, sentences are not simply constructed by adding up individual segments. First, segments are externally organized to form an “invisible” unit that is syllable which exists between the melody of segments and metrical organization of linguistic structures. In Crystal (2008, p. 467), it is defined as “a unit of pronunciation typically larger than a single sound and smaller than a word”. This abstract unit is termed as “syllable” by Greek people and in Latin, it is known as “syllaba”. In Indian tradition, in order to understand the concept of syllable the term “akshara” has been used. The etymological meaning of “Akshara” refers to something which can not be destroyed.

The cross-linguistic studies tell us that in almost all languages there is a variation in the relative prominence of syllables. The prominence of syllables is referred to as stress. In Crystal (2008, p. 454), it is defined as “a term used in phonetics to refer to the degree of force used in producing a syllable”. For example, in the English word “parrot”, the first syllable “pa” is more prominent than “rrot”, so the first syllable is stressed and second syllable is unstressed (Davenport and Hannahs, 2005). In selecting the appropriate syllables for prominence placement, factors like rhythm, position, quantity, and morphology play vital roles. Prominent syllables also tend to be of longer duration and higher intensity. The absence of clear phonetic property of stress makes it difficult to detect stressed syllables in a language. In general, stress assignment is based on rhythm and/or syllable weight which looks at the rhyme structure.

While speaking in any language of the world a native speaker produces various kinds of melodies. It is because while we speak the pitch of our voice sometimes goes up, sometimes down and sometimes it remains level or steady. The pitch is the basic element for both tone and intonation. Tone is a property of individual syllable or word while intonation is a property of longer stretches such as phrases or sentences. Like consonants and vowels, tone plays an important role in distinguishing the meaning of the word. In Nupe language, the sequence [ba] can be produced using three different varieties of pitch. When low pitch is used it means “to count”, high pitch means “to be sour”, whereas if the pitch level between high and low is used, it means “to cut” (Davenport and Hannahs, 2005).

A language may or may not have lexical tones but intonation contours over a phrase or a sentence occur in all languages. Intonation contour on phrases or sentences helps to transmit differences in meaning. For example, in English falling and rising intonation contours over an utterance are used to distinguish a statement from a question. An utterance that has a falling intonation contour as in “He eats an apple” is usually perceived as a statement whereas the same sentence produced with a rising intonation contour would be perceived as a question – “He eats an apple?” To point out the basic nature of intonation, Cruttenden equates it specifically with pitch movement, while Coulthard identifies it with prosody which would include not only pitch movements but also loudness, length, speed, and even voice quality (Ranalli, 2002).

### *Segments of SHB*

Being a speech form of Eastern Bengal areas, though SHB shares an identical form of phonetics as well as phonology with all other dialects of Bangla of this area, there exist some particular properties in SHB such as, its distinctive sound system, its excessive indulgence on friction, its unique tone and intonation properties which give it a unique picture compared to other dialects of Bangla. SHB sound system exhibits certain special properties which are traceable in no other dialects of Bangla. For that reason, people of other dialect areas of Bangla can hardly understand anything of it.

After investigating SHB words it is found that SHB carries five monophthongs — /i u ε ɔ a /. With regard to SHB diphthongs, I divide them into three sections based on their ending vowel — fronting diphthong ending in i, centering diphthong ending in a, and backing diphthong with u, ɔ . The sixteen diphthongs of SHB are / ui ei ai au oi eu iɔ ua ou ɔa ɛa iu ia εɔ aɔ uɔ/.

In respect to consonants, SHB has twenty sounds — seven non-aspirated stops /b ɸ ɖ ʈ ɗ k g/ three voiceless aspirated stops /tʰ tʰ kʰ/, four fricatives, /ɸ ʃ s z x /, three nasals /m n ŋ/, one alveolar flap /r/, one retroflex flap /ɽ/, one lateral /l/ and one glide /y/. SHB lacks voiceless bilabial stop /p/, voiceless and voiced alveolar stops /t d/, voiceless and voiced labiodental fricatives /f v/, voiced palato-alveolar /ʒ/, palato-alveolar affricates /tʃ ɖʒ/.

### *Syllable pattern of SHB*

The syllable structure of SHB consists of onset and rhyme. Onset is composed of only one consonant immediately located in front of the nucleus and rhythm is further classified into nucleus and coda. SHB is not very strict about having

onset and coda in every syllable. So, it can be logically claimed that in SHB onset and coda may be optional. The general rule of syllabification in SHB words is very simple. Word can begin with both a syllabic element V (in VC) as in /am/ “mango” or a non-syllabic element C (in CV) as in /ga/ “body”. Consonant clusters are not allowed in word initial and word final position. Medial CCC cluster is found though very rare. In an open monosyllable the vowel can be lengthened.

From the examination of consonant+vowel sequences in SHB monosyllabic words, eight types of syllable structures (four for open and four for closed syllables) are found in this dialect as demonstrated below.

#### Open syllable

V                    ɔ            ‘is it?’

VV                  ou        ‘this’

CVV                boi      ‘book’

CV                  ga       ‘body’

#### Closed syllable

VC                  am      ‘mango’

VVC                ail      ‘boundary of a paddy land’

CVC                xam    ‘work’

CVVC              ɖour   ‘run’

#### *Stress pattern of SHB*

SHB words are classified into three groups based on their internal structure – words containing only light syllables, words containing only heavy syllables and words containing both light and heavy syllables. SHB native words containing four or five syllables are very rare. There appear to be two degrees of stress: primary and secondary. Light+light combination SHB words form trochaic feet from left-to-right such as (ˈba.ɾi) “home”. In a sequence of three light syllables, a trochee is constructed on the two left-most syllables with initial prominence and third syllable remains unparsed because of its light monosyllabic nature such as (ˈgu.la)bi “pink”. SHB speakers discard an alternative option of L(LL). It implies that they prefer to construct foot aligning with the left edge of the grammatical word. In SHB only VC, CVC

and CVVC type syllables are considered as heavy attracting stress. Canonical vowel length of V: type is not distinctive in SHB. In the case of heavy+heavy combination, only the first syllable attracts stress obeying syllabic trochaic feet form from left-to-right for example, (ˈbain̩.gɔn) “eggplant”.

SHB speakers discard stressing two successive heavy syllables. Thus the principle weight-to-stress (WSP) is dominated to avoid clash between two successive syllables. In sequences of three heavy syllables HHH, the first two heavy syllables form a trochaic foot with primary stress on the left. The third one being heavy also initiates a foot with secondary stress.

Disyllabic words of light and heavy combination attract initial stress irrespective of its internal structure for example, (ˈba.liʃ) “pillow”, (ˈhuk.na) “thin”. However, in the cases of tri-syllabic words stress distribution becomes apparently irregular due to the presence of heavy syllables. Heavy syllable attracts stress and this is so powerful a requirement that it can override otherwise inviolable principles of word-initial primary stress and of non-final prominence. Primary prominence shifts to the second syllable if the first syllable is light and second is heavy in the case of tri-syllabic words for example, ɸu(ˈrɔʃ.xar) “prize”. The third initiates a foot with secondary stress after the primary foot is constructed over the two initial light syllables, for example, (ɸɔ.ˈta) (ˈxal) “dawn”. This results in sequences of successive feet. However, two successive heavy syllables do not initiate two feet. So, one can argue that SHB is quantity sensitive, *albeit partially*.

### ***Intonation pattern of SHB***

For the intonation part in this paper, I have only investigated wh-question of SHB. It is because the interference of the rules of wh-question of SHB in learning the wh-question of English is very prominent compared to other types of sentences. From the experiment on wh-question, it is noted and pointed out that in the wh-question, the wh-phrase is considered by the native speakers as the most significant phrase in the sentence. For example, in the sentence //xar boi iʔa// “Whose book is this?, the wh-phrase /xar/ “whose” is the prominent phrase of the sentence. Therefore, within the phonological phrase of wh-question, the wh-word is considered to be the nuclear accent of the question and within the intonational phrase of wh-question the phonological phrase which bears wh-word receives the strongest stress of the intonational phrase.

In the case of wh-question with utterance initial or medial wh-word, the left-most word is the main stressed word which attracts pitch accent and in the case of wh-questions with utterance final wh-word the rightmost word of the strongest phonological phrase is the main stressed word; in all the cases the P-phrase bearing the most stressed wh-word receives the strongest stress of its I-phrase.

The following demonstration shows the stress pattern of representative SHB wh-question with sentence initial wh-word.

x			Phrasal level
x	x	x	Word level
x	x	x	Syllabic level
[[xar] <sub>P</sub> [boi] <sub>P</sub> [iʔa] <sub>P</sub> ] <sub>IP</sub>			
//xar boi iʔa// “Whose book is this?”			

In the above stress pattern of wh-question //xar boi iʔa// “Whose book is this?” has three phonological phrases i.e. [xar], [boi] and [iʔa]. In the first p-phrase [xar], wh-word /xar/ “whose” is the main stressed word. Since p-phrase [xar] bears the main stressed word of the whole sentence so this leftmost phrase is the strongest phrase of Intonational Phrase //xar boi iʔa//. Now we examine the stress pattern of SHB wh-question with sentence medial wh-word.

x			Phrasal level
x	x	x	Word level
x	x	x	Syllabic level
[[ma.la] <sub>P</sub> [ki.ʔa] <sub>P</sub> [xai.bɔ] <sub>P</sub> ] <sub>IP</sub>			
//ma.la ki.ʔa xai.bɔ// “What will Mala eat?”			

In the above representation of stress, it is noticed that SHB wh-question //ma.la ki.ʔa xai.bɔ// “What will Mala eat?” has three phonological phrases i.e. [ma.la], [ki.ʔa], and [xai.bɔ]. In the second p-phrase [ki.ʔa], wh-word /ki.ʔa/ “what” is the main stressed word, and the first syllable /ki/ of the phonological word /ki.ʔa/ is the main stressed syllable. Since p-phrase [ki.ʔa] bears the main stressed word of the whole sentence so this phrase is the strongest phrase of Intonational Phrase //ma.la ki.ʔa xai.bɔ//.

Now we demonstrate stress pattern of a representative wh-question with sentence final wh-word given below.

	x		Phrasal level
x	x	x	Word level
x	x	x	Syllabic level
[[ʔɔr] <sub>P</sub> [nam] <sub>P</sub> [ki.ʔa] <sub>P</sub> ] <sub>IP</sub>			



//t̪ɔr nam ki.ɬa// “What is your name?”

The above wh-question //t̪ɔr nam ki.ɬa// has three phonological phrases [t̪ɔr], [nam] and [ki.ɬa]. The left syllable /ki/ of the phonological phrase /ki.ɬa/ is the main stressed syllable and the word /ki.ɬa/ is the strongest word of this phrase. Since p-phrase [ki.ɬa] bears the main stressed word of the whole sentence so this right most phrase is the strongest phrase of Intonational Phrase //t̪ɔr nam ki.ɬa//.

After finding out the main stressed word in SHB wh-questions we move on to demonstrate the intonation contour of SHB wh-questions. From our experiment on SHB wh-questions it is revealed that in SHB wh-questions with utterance initial or medial or final wh-word high (H\*) pitch accent falls on the most prominent word i.e. wh-word and intonational phrase boundary is marked with low tone (L%).

Now coming to SHB wh-question with utterance initial wh-word, it is noticed that the contour starts with a rise and high (H\*) pitch accent falls on the nucleus of wh-word and low (L%) boundary tone falls on the utterance final position (see Figure 1).

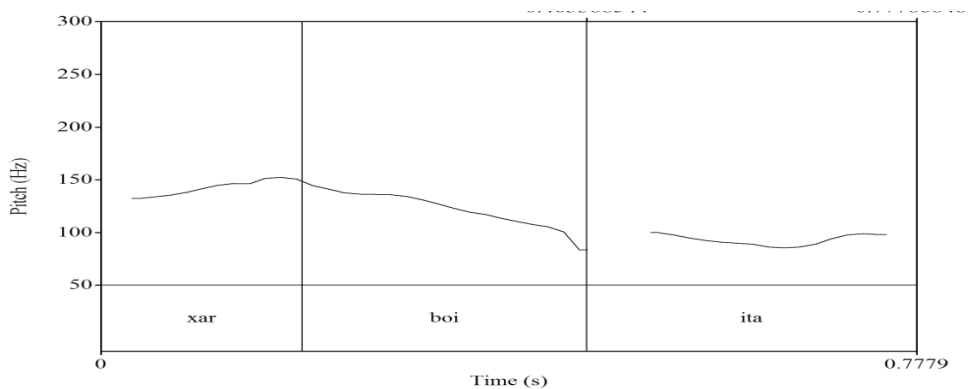


Figure 1. //xar boi iɬa// “Whose book is this?”

In Figure 1, wh-word /xar/ “whose” is placed at sentence initial position which starts with a shallow rise and H\* tone falls on its peak. Here also low (L%) boundary tone falls on the sentence final position. Figure 2 demonstrates the intonation contour of a representative wh-question with utterance medial wh-word in SHB.

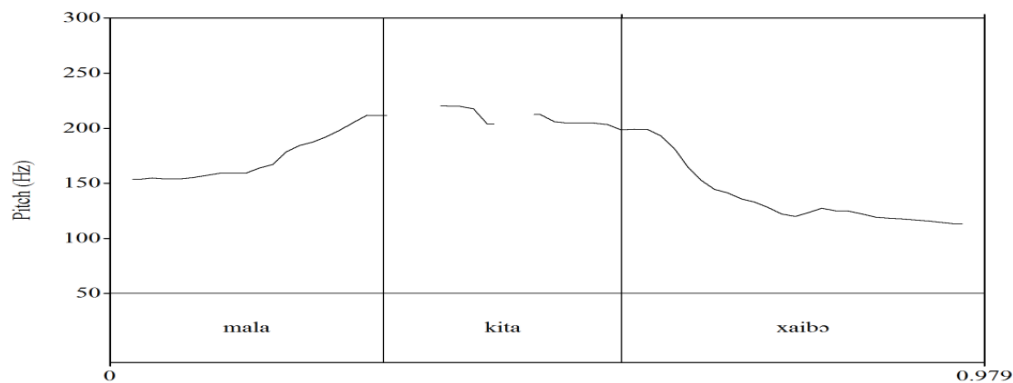


Figure 2. //ma.la ki.ʈa xai.bɔ// “What will Mala eat?”

In Figure 2, we see that in the phonological phrase [ki.ʈa], wh-word /ki.ʈa/ “what” is the main stressed word and the first syllable /ki/ of the phonological word /ki.ʈa/ is the main stressed syllable which carries H\* pitch accent. The boundary tone that falls here is low (L%). So in the I-Phrase //ma.la ki.ʈa xai.bɔ// “What will Mala eat?”, the *leftmost* Phonological phrase [ki.ʈa] “what” is the strongest phonological phrase as it carries main stressed word /ki.ʈa/ which attracts pitch accent.

Like the previous examples, in the case of wh-question with utterance final wh-word the same intonation contour is noticed. The main stressed word i.e. wh-word /ki.ʈa/ receives H\* pitch accent and boundary tone of IP receives Low tone (L%).

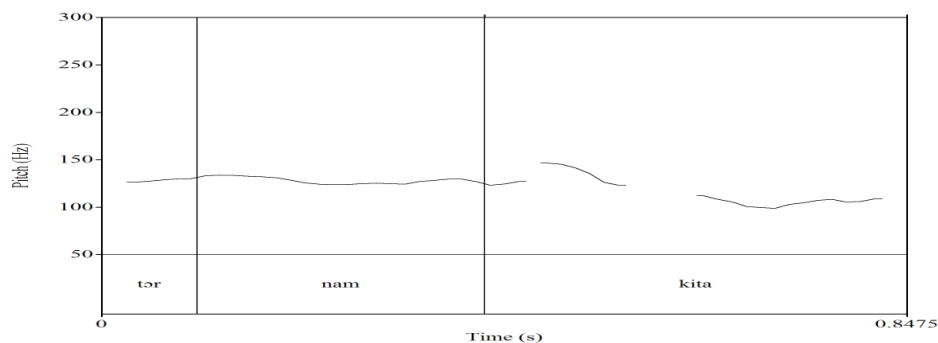


Figure 3. //ʈɔr nam ki.ʈa// “What is your name?”

In Figure 3, wh-word /ʈɔr nam ki.ʈa/ “what” is placed at sentence final position and it is the main stressed word in the sentence. The pitch accent that falls on the nucleus of the first syllable /ki/ of the wh-word /ki.ʈa/ is high tone (H\*), and low (L%) tone acts as a boundary tone.

From the simplest description of SHB wh-questions with utterance initial or medial or final wh-word, it can be stated that in SHB the intonation

contour of wh-questions is rise-fall. Besides the above examples of SHB wh-questions, there are some other examples of wh-questions where SHB speakers use clitic – ba. In such cases also the same rise-fall contour is noticed (see Figure 4). In Figure 4, wh-word /xɛ/ “who” occurs with the following clitic /-ba/ and the same intonation pattern i.e. H\* as a nucleus tone and L% as a boundary tone are used.

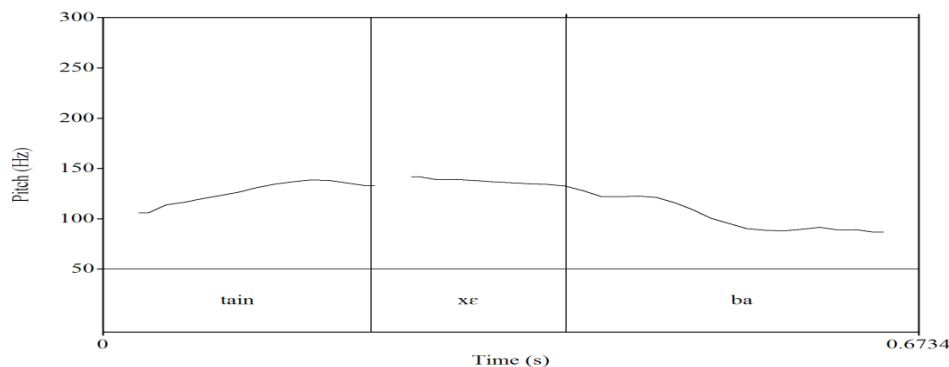


Figure 4. //tʰain xɛ ba// “Who is he?”

### Contrastive analysis between English and SHB

In this section, first I will demonstrate the contrastive picture of English and SHB in respect to phonological aspects such as segments, syllable, stress, and intonation. Then, I will discuss the phonological aspects of Sylheti English, a variety of English spoken by Sylheti people.

In spoken communication clear pronunciation is essential. When learners have good command over pronunciation and intonation they are more likely to communicate effectively even though they produce minor inaccuracies in vocabulary and grammar. The various features that constitute the production of sounds in English are illustrated below.

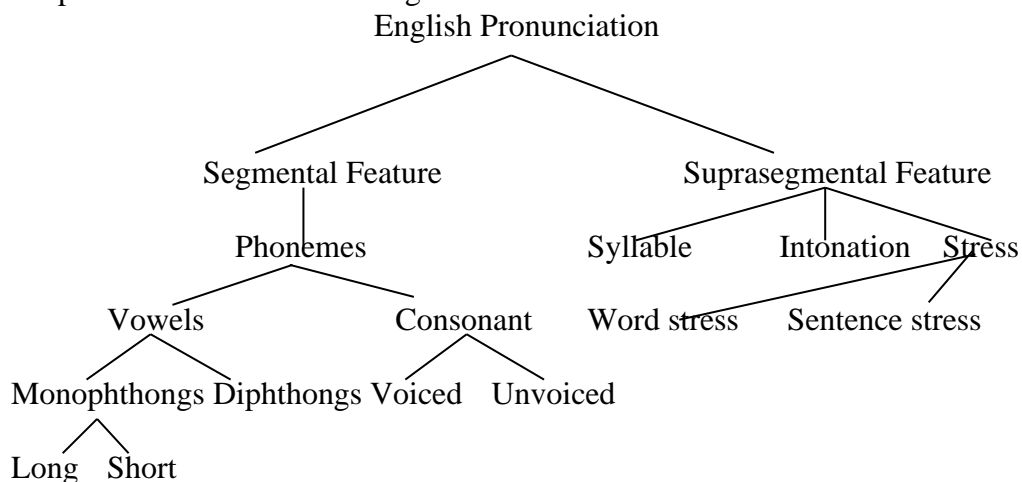


Figure 5. Aspects of English pronunciation in respect of segmentals and suprasegmentals

Figure 5 illustrates the aspects of English pronunciation in respect of segmentals and suprasegmentals. I start with segmental features. In comparison with the picture of the vowel inventory of the L1 of the SHE speakers, the target language i.e. English has a system of twelve monophthongs including long and short that are shown in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1

*English short monophthongs*

	Front unrounded	Central unrounded	Back rounded
High	ɪ		ʊ
High-mid	e	ə	
Low-mid		ʌ	ɒ
Low	æ		

Table 2

*English long monophthongs*

	Front unrounded	Central unrounded	Back rounded
High	i:		u:
High-mid			
Low-mid		ɜ:	ɔ:
Low			ɑ: (unrounded)

In SHB there are five vowels –/ i u ɛ ɔ a / with one allophonic variant each of /ɔ/ and /ɛ/ i.e. the high mid vowels o and e respectively. For clarity Table 3 shows SHB monophthongs.

Table 3

*SHB monophthongs*

	Front unrounded	Central unrounded	Back rounded
High	i		u
High-mid			
Low-mid	ɛ		ɔ
Low			

It is obvious from the comparison between the two vowel systems that English carries more variations regarding monophthongs in comparison with

SHB. Our findings tell us that when SHB speakers learn English they have a tendency to reduce English vowels according to the system of their L1 vowel phonology. Table 4 shows the reduction of English monophthongs in SHE by SHB speakers.

Table 4  
*SHE sounds*

English	SHE
i: ɪ →	i
e æ →	ɛ
ɜ: ʌ ɑ: →	a
ɒ ɔ: →	ɔ
u: ʊ →	u
ə →	Null

The left column of Table 4 shows RP vowels and the right column their reduced correspondents in SHE. The first point of difference is the lack of [ATR] feature in the reduced version. It implies that SHB phonology does not possess phonemic difference between short and long vowels. Hence during their pronunciation of English vowels [+ATR] feature is lost. In the reduced version SHB speakers retain only [+high] and [-back] features. We show the change from long front vowel i: to short high vowel i, to begin with.

i: → i

English	SHE	Gloss
it	it̚	“eat”
bit	bi̚t̚	“beat”
mi:n	mi:n	“mean”

English /e æ/ turn into one single vowel of SHB /ɛ/. For this reason, pronunciation of many words gets deviated from the standard RP.

e æ → ɛ

English	SHE	Gloss
bæd	bɛd̚	“bad”
kæt	kɛt̚	“cat”
gæs	gɛʃ	“gas”

This reductionism results in the birth of SHE vowels / i ɛ/ from

English vowels /i: ɪ e æ/ in the front zone. In the back flank a similar picture is noticed — two English back high vowels /u: ʊ/ get reduced to /ʊ/.

u: ʊ → ʊ

English	SHE	Gloss
bu:t	bʊt	“boot”
pʊl	ɸʊl	“pull”

In the same way two non-high non-low English back vowels /ɒ ɔ:/ are reduced to /ɔ/.

ɒ ɔ: → ɔ

bɒdi	bɔɖi	“body”
bɔ:l	bɔl	“ball”

On the back flank we witness the reduction of English back vowels from four to two in SHE: /u: ʊ ɒ ɔ:/ → /ʊ ɔ/.

As for central vowel reduction occurs not only in respect of quantity but also quality. Central vowels /ʌ ɜ:/ are reduced to low front vowel /a/. Sometimes /ʌ/ changes into /ɔ/.

ʌ → a/ɔ

English	SHE	Gloss
fʌn	ɸan	“fun”
nʌmbə	nɔmbɔr	“number”

RP central long vowel /ɜ:/ is articulated as /a/ in SHE.

ɜ: → a

English	SHE	Gloss
bɜ:d	baɖ	“bird”
sɜ:kl	sarkɐl	“circle”

This SHB low front vowel /a/ also takes the place of English lowest back vowel /ɑ:/.

ɑ: → a

klɑ:k	xlak	“clerk”
fɑ:m	ɸam	“farm”
mɑ:stə	mɑʃtɔr	“master”

The net result of all these reductions is that SHE vowel system emerges with a spectacular presence of L1 (i.e. SHB) vowels: /i ʊ e ɔ a/ which is demonstrated in Table 5.

Table 5  
*SHE vowels*

	Front unrounded	Central unrounded	Back rounded
High	i		u
High-mid			
Low-mid	ɛ		ɔ
Low	a		

Another mid central English vowel /ə/ creates a problem for SHB learners of English, as this vowel does not have an exact equivalent in SHB. This vowel is specially used in English in unstressed syllables. Then, which vowel do SHB speakers adopt for the articulation of the segment? It is noticed that SHB speakers replace /ə/ by a vowel from their native ones thanks to ignorance or imperfect knowledge. For instance, the first vowel in /ə.bʌv/ “above” is pronounced in English as [ə]. SHB speakers replace it with [ɛ] and place stress on it: [ɛ.bʌv]. Many such instances are noted in SHE and some are cited below.

ə → ɛ a

English	SHE	Gloss
əbaʊt	ɛbauɿ	“about”
əbaʊnd	ɛbaundɿ	“abound”
kəlkt	xalkɛɿ	“collect”
sɪgərət	sɪgɛɾɛɿ	“cigarette”

This reduction gives birth to many homophonous words in SHE. In English these sounds have different pronunciations with different meanings, whereas in English they have distinct pronunciation with distinct meanings, such as, in SHE both “bet” and “bat” are replaced as /bɛɿ/. Some more examples are demonstrated below.

English	SHE	Gloss
fi:l	ɸil	“feel”
fil	ɸil	“fill”
kɔ:t	xɔɿ	“caught”
kɒt	xɔɿ	“cot”
bed	bɛɿ	“bed”

bæd	bɛd	“bad”
fu:l	ɸul	“fool”
ful	ɸul	“full”

Coming to diphthongs, while SHB carries 16 diphthongs English has only eight. The frequent errors SHB speakers make in respect of English diphthongs are a) in SHE, many English words with monophthongs are pronounced with diphthongs and b) many English diphthongs are substituted by monophthongs.

#### Monophthongs → Diphthongs

English	SHE	Gloss
fɔ:	ɸlour	“floor”
mɔ:(r)	mour	“more”
bel	bɛl	“bell”

#### Diphthongs → Monophthongs

English	SHE	Gloss
fɔləʊ	ɸɔɔ	“follow”
nju:zpeɪpə	niuzɸɛɸɛr	“newspaper”
nəʊtɪs	nuɪɪʃ	“notice”
dɛɪndʒərəs	ɔɛnzaras	“dangerous”
elbəʊ	ɛɔ	“elbow”
eɪbl	ɛbul	“able”
prəʊtɪn	ɸɔɪn	“protein”
reɪl	rɛl	“rail”

Like vowels, consonants also show significant variations between SHB and English. English has six plosives, nine fricatives; seven sonorants: three nasals, three approximants, and one lateral. SHB has ten plosives, four fricatives, three nasals, one lateral and two liquids. Tables 6 and 7 capture the comparative pictures.

Table 6  
*English consonants*

	Bilabial	Labiodental	Dental	Alveolar	Palato-alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
	Vl Vd	Vl Vd	Vl Vd	Vl Vd	Vl Vd	Vl Vd	Vl Vd	Vl Vd



Plosive	p b			t d			k g	
Fricative		f v	θ ð	s z	ʃ ʒ			h
Affricate					tʃ dʒ			
Nasal	m			n			ŋ	
Flap								
Lateral				l				
Approxima nt	w				r	j		

Table 7  
*SHB consonants*

		Labia l	Denta l	Alveola r	Retrofle x	Alveo - palatal	Vela r	Glotta l
		Vl Vd	Vl Vd	Vl Vd	Vl Vd	Vl Vd	Vl Vd	Vl Vd
Plosiv e	Un- asp	b	t̚ d̚		t d		k g	
	As p		t̚ <sup>h</sup> d̚ <sup>h</sup>		t <sup>h</sup> d <sup>h</sup>			
Fricative		ɸ		s z	ʃ ʒ		x	h
Nasal		m		n		ɲ		
Flap				r	ɾ			
Lateral				l				

The important fact about /r/ is that in English during its articulation the tip of the tongue does not touch any part of the mouth, it only approaches the alveolar area. However, SHB pronunciation of /p/ is different from RP pronunciation: in SHB during its pronunciation tongue makes contact with palate. Again, in English /r/ is uttered in several ways depending on its position in a word. It is uttered before vowel word-initially and word-medially. In word final position it is not pronounced except when it is

followed by a vowel in the next word. The English examples below from Roach (2000) bear this out.

Prevocalic r		Postvocalic and word final r	
red	“red”	kɑ:	“car”
əraɪv	“arrive”	evə	“ever”
hiərɪŋ	“hearing”	hiə	“here”

On the contrary, in SHB /r/ is pronounced in all positions of the word. The difference is noticeable in the pronunciation of some English words by SHB speakers. SHB learners, orthographically guided and lacking in phonological information, pronounce r. Remember, SHB is a rhotic language, English is not.

SHE	Gloss	SHE	Gloss
xar	“car”	hard	“hard”
ɛvar	“ever”	b <sup>h</sup> ars	“verse”

Like vowels, for consonants also in SHE English consonants are frequently substituted by the consonants of SHB (Table 8).

Table 8  
*English and SHE consonants*

English (RP)	SHE
p f →	ϕ
k →	x
θ ð →	t <sup>h</sup> t d
t d →	t d
s ʃ →	ʃ s
ʒ ʒ →	z
w j →	ui ia u i

Due to the fricativization of plosives SHB speakers always commit errors in pronouncing English plosives k and p as evidenced by the examples below.

p → ϕ, k → x

English	SHE	Gloss
---------	-----	-------

pɒkɪt	ɸɔkɛt	“pocket”
pəʊst	ɸouʃt	“post”
klɑ:s	xɛlaʃ	“class”
kæp	xɛɸ	“cap”

In SHE, English voiceless dental /θ/ is pronounced as aspirated /tʰ/ in word initial position and in other cases non-aspirated /t/. The voiced dental /ð/ is pronounced as /d/ everywhere in SHE. These sounds are pronounced in English “with the tip touching the inside of the lower front teeth and the blade touching the inside of the upper teeth” (Roach, 2000, p. 51). However, in SHE dental /t d/ are pronounced with the tongue touching behind the upper teeth. The comparative examples shown below illustrate how in SHE English dentals change into SHB sounds.

θ → tʰ, t	ð → d	
English	SHE	Gloss
θru:	tʰru	“through”
ðʌs	dʌz	“thus”

Voiceless alveolar fricative /s/ and voiceless palato-alveolar affricate /tʃ/ in most of the cases change into SHB voiceless sibilant sound /ʃ/ or voiceless alveolar fricative /s/ in SHE. The examples below bear this out.

tʃ → s, s → ʃ		
English	SHE	Gloss
tʃɑ:t	sɑt	“chart”
tʃɔ:k	sɔk	“chalk”
sut	ʃut	“suit”
stʌ:f	ʃtʌɸ	“stuff”

English voiced alveolar affricate /dʒ/ and voiced palatal fricative /ʒ/ are substituted by SHB voiced alveolar fricative /z/ in SHE.

dʒ ʒ → z		
English	SHE	Gloss
meʒə	mɛzə	“measure”
treʒə	tɛzə	“treasure”

ɔ̃ækɪt                      zəkɛt                      “jacket”

English voiceless and voiced alveolar plosives /t d/ are replaced by SHB alveo-retroflex /ɖ ɗ/ in SHE.

t → ɖ, d → ɗ

English	SHE	Gloss
ti:tʃə	ɖisar	“teacher”
tɔ:k	ɖɔk	“talk”
dɒg	ɗɔg	“dog”
dɒl	ɗɒl	“doll”

In English, “when the voiceless plosives /p t k/ begin the word, there is likely to be an audible puff of air following the release” (Davenport & Hannahs, 2005, p. 22). In SHB we notice aspiration only in the case of a few segments such as dentals /t̪ d̪/. Velar /k/ retains aspiration selectively and this aspiration is phonemic as it distinguishes meaning. Due to the absence of phonetic aspiration of voiceless plosives SHB speakers do not apply this rule in SHE. The following data is illustrated.

English	SHE	Gloss
p <sup>h</sup> en	φɛn	“pen”
t <sup>h</sup> aim	taim	“time”
keik	xeik	“cake”

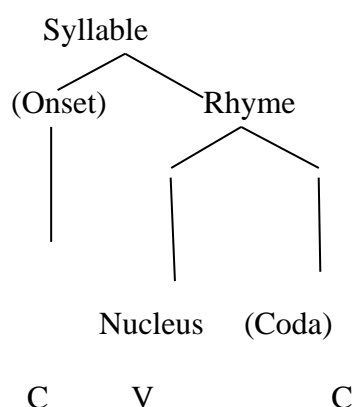
In English there are two semivowels /j w/, but SHB attests no clear presence of semivowels. How do SHB speakers cope with the English semivowels!

j → i/ia	w → u/ua	
English	SHE	Gloss
wɔ:k	uak	“walk”
wɒn	uantɖ	“want”
jʌŋ	iaŋ	“young”
jes	ies	“yes”

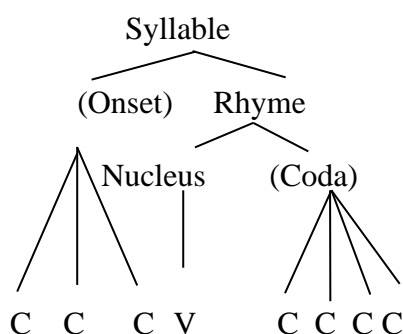
SHB speakers replace English semivowels /w/ and /j/ by vowels /u/ and /i/ respectively. Like the errors occur in segments SHB speakers also do supra-segmental errors regarding syllable, stress, tone and other factors. The process of syllable division of the word is a natural process in a language. The arrangements of the syllables in a word are shared by the native speakers dictated by intuition. For example, in English there are some words which can

have variable pronunciation: “bottling” can be parsed into two or three syllables; “realistic” in three or four. So, variable syllabification is a reality, though treated as marginal and hence immaterial in literature. Let us look at the picture of syllable structures of SHB vis-a-vis English.

#### Syllable structure in SHB



#### Syllable structure in English



From the above, it is obvious that English has a complex syllable structure unlike SHB. The former permits consonant clusters at syllable margins i.e. onset and coda. The language allows three consonants in the beginning of a syllable and up to four in the end. The following set testifies to this point.

#### CV(C)

ki: “key”  
 rʌn “run”  
 fɪl “fill”  
 sæt “sat”

#### CCV(C)

stɪŋ “sting”  
 pleɪ “play”  
 traɪ “try”  
 sməʊk “smoke”

#### CCCV(C)

splɪt “split”  
 stri:m “stream”  
 strɒŋ “strong”  
 straɪk “strike”

One important thing is that in comparison to CCC- clusters, CC- clusters show a huge variety of combinations. There are some constraints operational on English syllable structure and these are as follows. In English except /ŋ/ any other single consonant can function as an onset of a syllable. Besides this, in English no words can begin with nt, lk, mp, tl, dl, ps, pm, vw, rd. /t d θ/ cannot be combined with /l/ in onset cluster; nasals cannot be combined with stops in onset. In the onset cluster the fricatives /v ð z ʒ / never occur. In case of three element onset clusters, the initial consonant is invariably voiceless alveolar stop /s/, the medial one a voiceless plosive such as /p t/ or /k/ while the third or final consonant before the vowel should without exception be any one of the set of liquids and glides /l r w j/.

Like the onset, in the field of English coda we find it permits up to four consonants to end a syllable. The two consonant coda clusters are predominant compared to three consonant clusters. In English /l w j / never occur as coda consonant. English coda contains from zero to four consonants as testified by the following words.

VC	VCC	VCCC	VCCCC
i:z“ease”	bent “bent”	tempt “tempt”	tempts “tempts”
æm“am”	bæŋk“bank”	tekst “text”	teksts “texts”
ɔ:t“ought”	belt “belt”	nekst “next”	prompts “prompts”

From this comparison, it is obvious that syllable structure of SHB is much simpler than in English. So pronunciation of an English syllable with cluster becomes problematic to the SHB learners of English. One needs to investigate how SHB speakers negotiate with the clustered margins of English. SHB speakers of English adopt certain strategies so as to pronounce the English clusters according to the phonotactics of their own language. In such cases, learners delete a consonant from the cluster or sometimes they insert a vowel inside the cluster or before the cluster, and re-syllabify the syllable according to SHB phonotactics. The following examples illustrate this.

#### Vowel Epenthesis in onset cluster

English	SHE	Gloss
blaus	bɛ.lauz	“blouse”
sleit	sɛ.lɛt	“slate”
plastik	φɛ.las.tik	“plastic”
klas	xɛ.laʃ	“class”

## Deletion in onset cluster

English	SHE	Gloss
preznt	ɸɛzɛn	‘present’
praɪvt	ɸaɪbɛt	‘private’
ɔ̃rein	ɔ̃ɛin	‘drain’

## Deletion in coda cluster

English	SHE	Gloss
pænt	ɸɛn	pant
læmp	lɛm	lamp
pʌmp	ɸam	pump

Now we examine some other common errors of SHB speakers in speaking English. However, before analyzing these errors we will look at how English speakers pronounce them and what is the reason behind these types of pronunciation. In English some syllables are strong and some are weak. There are some strategies to identify strong syllable and weak syllable. Weak syllables are always unstressed. Strong syllables always have coda if the vowel is short. At the end of the word, there may be a weak syllable ending with a vowel. The vowel /ə/ is always associated with weak syllables which is common in English. /ə/ or schwa is typically found as the first vowel in “above” or the last vowel in “extra”.

This phenomenon of weak and strong syllable is absent from SHB phonology. That is why SHE speakers do not resort to reducing unstressed vowel: in fact, the phenomenon of reduction is absent in SHB phonology. The examples below make it clear.

English	SHE	Gloss
lɪtrətʃə	lɪtʌɾɛsar	“literature”
bɛtə	bɛtʌr	“better”
næʃnlə	nɛʃanal	“national”
əʊpən	ɔ̃ɸɛn	“open”

A vowel acts as a nucleus in almost all syllables of a language and on either side of this vowel, there may have one or more consonants as its margins. For example, in /bed/ the vowel acting as the nucleus is /e/ and the consonant at the margins are /b/ and /d/. In English, some consonants act as the nucleus of syllables. English consonants /n m l r/ can function in this way: /teɪbl/ “table”. These consonants are called syllabic consonants. In SHB only

vowel can act as nucleus: the phenomenon of syllabic consonants is absent. For that reason, SHB learners of English face trouble during the pronunciation of English words with syllabic consonants as they treat them as consonants and insert a vowel before it as exemplified in the comparison below of English and SHB examples.

English	SHE	Gloss
sɪmpl	sɪmɸul	“simple”
bɒtl	bʊtl	“bottle”
pædl	ɸɛdl	“paddle”
ləukl	lukal	“local”
strʌgl	ʃtʌgul	“struggle”

In English, listeners can identify the words based on their stress patterns. For that reason, if stress patterns of English are not noted carefully by the English learners in the pronunciation of the words, it results in errors in speech. In this regard, Bansal (1976) opines that in India misperception arises because of the errors in the stress patterns of English.

To get a clear picture of English stress patterns Roach (2000) is helpful. He mentions that the rhythm structure of English language is “stress-timed”. This means that in English “stressed syllables tend to occur at relatively regular intervals whether they are separated by unstressed syllables or not” (Roach, 2000, p. 134). Three levels of stress are primary stress, secondary stress, and absence of any stress. The strongest type of stress is the primary stress whereas secondary stress is stronger than the unstressed syllable but the weaker than the primary stress. The stress system of English is not fixed and there are many variations which give a complex stress system to English.

In English, the falling of stress on a syllable is dependent on the structure of the syllable, whether it is light or heavy. A syllable is considered as heavy in English if it consists of a long vowel or diphthong or a vowel followed by a coda. On the contrary, when a syllable is formed with a short vowel and it does not have any coda, it is considered a light syllable. The stress system is also based on “whether the word is morphologically simple, or whether it is as a result either of containing one or more affixes (that is, prefixes or suffixes) or of being a compound word or the grammatical category of a particular word (noun, verb, adjective), or how many syllable the word has, or what the phonological structure of those syllable is”. (Roach, 2000, p. 97). Another fact is that in English the occurrence of stress can be on any of the syllables: antepenultimate, penultimate or final. However, stress pattern may vary within different forms of the same word for example “logic” has main stress on “lo”, but in “logicality”, “ca” bears main stress, and in “logician” it is “gi” which is most prominent. Another kind of stress in English



is function stress that helps to distinguish words. For example, words like “perfect”, “combat”; each of these has two different stress patterns depending on the position of the main stress. If the first syllable is stressed the word is noun, and if the second syllable is stressed we have a verb.

Other factors involved in English stress system include ascertaining the word class (noun, adjective, verb.), and the nature of suffixes that may form part of the word (-ate, -ic, -ity). Discussion on these follows as per Roach (ibid.).

In two-syllable words, only one syllable gets stressed — either the first or the second, never both. The rule is that stress always falls on strong syllable e.g., /ˈkʌm.fət/ “comfort”, /ˈkʌm.pəs/, “compass”, and /ˈfeɪ.və/ “favour”. Converse, second syllable, being strong, gets stress in /ə.ˈbrɔːd/ “abroad”, and /ə.ˈbrest/ “abreast”. If the final syllable contains əʊ, it is considered unstressed such as /ˈreɪ.dɪəʊ/ “radio”, and /ˈbɒ.rəʊ/ “borrow”. In the case of nouns, stress placement is governed by a different rule. Stress is placed on the first syllable if the second syllable is formed with a short vowel (/ˈmʌ.nɪ/, “money”, /ˈprɒ.dʌkt/ “product”). However, if the second syllable is heavy, stress falls on the second – /ɪ.ˈsteɪt/ “estate”, /dɪ.ˈzʌn/ “design”.

In three-syllable words stress pattern is complicated. In the case of verbs, the stress falls on the final syllable if it is heavy, for example, /en.tə.ˈteɪn/ “entertain”, /re.zə.ˈrekt/ “resurrect”. Otherwise, the preceding syllable attracts stress if it is strong. For example: /ɪŋ.ˈkaʊn.tə/ “encounter”, and /dɪ.ˈtɜː.mɪn/ “determine”. The initial syllable attracts stress if both the second and third syllables are weak, such as /ˈpæ.rə.dɪ/ “parody”. Like disyllabic words, in tri-syllables also nouns require a distinct rule. A final weak syllable or a final one ending in əʊ is unstressed. If the middle syllable is strong, it takes stress as in /dɪ.ˈzɑːs.tə/ “disaster”, /pə.ˈteɪ.təʊ/ “potato”. The first syllable gets stressed if both the second and third syllables are not strong as in /ˈkwɒn.tə.tɪ/ “quantity”, /ˈkʌs.tə.dɪ/ “custody”. Thus, the above rules ensure that stress falls mostly on strong syllables.

English polysyllables are generally derived through affixation and hence complex. Sometimes an affix itself receives the primary stress: /se.mi.sɜːkl/ “semicircle”. Stems getting stressed is the norm otherwise: compare /ˈple.zn̩t/ “pleasant” with /ˈʌn.ple.zn̩t/ “unpleasant”. Under affixation stress can shift albeit within the stem e.g. /ˈmæɡ.nət/ “magnet”, /mæɡ.ˈne.tɪk/ “magnetic”. When polysyllabic suffixes are attached commonly the first suffixal syllable gets the primary stress. In case the stem too consists

of more syllables than one, one non-final in the stem will get secondary stress. For example, /dʒə.'pʌn/ “Japan” → /dʒæ.pə.'ni:z / “Japanese”. Some examples of words where suffixes that do not affect stress are “-able”: /'kʌm.fət/ “comfort”, /'kʌmf.təbl/ “comfortable”. Some suffixes, -eous, -ic affects stress. In such cases, the primary stress falls on the last syllable of the stem such as /əd.'vɑ:n.tɪdʒ/ “advantage” but /æd.vən.'teɪ.dʒəs/ “advantageous”; /klaɪ.mɪt/ “climate” but /klaɪ.'mæ.tɪk/ “climatic”. Finally, when suffixes such as -ance, -ant and -ary are used in stems consist of only single syllable, stem tends to attract stress. When the stem has more than one syllable, the stress is on one of the syllables in the stem.

With these Roach (2000) also points out some other necessary rules to remember for learning the correct stress placement of English words. First, before stress placement, the speaker should determine whether the word is simple or complex. Next, the speaker should know the parts of speech of the word such as whether the word is noun or verb or adjective. In addition to the number of syllables and the phonological structure of those syllables in the word. Significantly, though Roach’s set of rules does not help to explain the stress pattern of all English words, they can still be applied to major categories of English lexical words such as nouns, verbs, and adjectives, though not to function words such as articles and prepositions.

Compared to English SHB metrics is very simple. SHB metrical pattern is binary. Word stress is syllable based as this dialect builds syllabic trochee from left to right iteratively. The minimal requirement for the prosodic word template is disyllabic. This disyllabic requirement is also fulfilled for a monosyllabic word or an odd-numbered heavy syllable stranded otherwise at the edge of the prosodic zone with the presence of a virtual syllable - a mechanism popularly called catalexis. A heavy syllable that normally attracts stress is constituted of a light monophthong followed by a coda consonant.

In the case of word stress of SHE the influence of SHB phonology is strongly present. English is a language in which lexical stress can be movable. Excepting a few instances in most of the cases regardless of grammatical class, an inviolable rule of SHB stress system dictates that the first syllable of a word has to be stressed. In SHB, stress placement takes place from left to right in a word. However, in English the direction is from right to left for example /dɪs.'mɪs/. SHB speakers misplace the stress applying it from left to right as in /'dɪs.miʃ/. The examples below of stress system of SHE show how it is different from English stress system due to the influence of mother tongue.

#### Stress placement in SHE

English	Foot Typology	SHE	Foot Typology
'pre.znt (N)	( 'LH)	'φɛ.zɛn (N)	( 'LH) “present”

pri.ˈznt (V) L(ˈH)	ˈpɛ.zɛn (V) (ˈLH)	“present”
bə.ˈlʊn L(ˈH)	ˈbɛ.lʊn (ˈLH)	“balloon”
di.ˈzain L(ˈH)	ˈdʒi.zain (ˈLH)	“design”
ˈkɒn.dʌkt (N)(ˈHH)	ˈkɒn.dʌk (N) (ˈHH)	“conduct”
kən.ˈdʌkt (V) L(ˈH)	ˈkɒn.dʌk (V) (ˈHH)	“conduct”
di.ˈleɪ L(ˈL)	ˈdʒi.le (ˈLL)	“delay”
kə.ˈmi.ti L(ˈLL)	ˈxo.mi.ti (ˈLL)L	“committee”
ˈdem.dʒə.rəs (ˈHL)L	ˈdʒɛn.za.ras(ˈHL)(H)	“dangerous”

The other aspect of prosodic phenomenon namely intonation will be looked upon now. Intonation has a great role in communication. Along with conveying linguistic information, it also regulates discourse.

As for SHB wh-questions we noted earlier that in SHB wh-phrase is considered by the native speakers as the most prominent one in wh-questions. Therefore, the pitch accent of the wh-phrase acts as the nuclear accent of the question. Another thing noted is that in SHB wh-questions also a low boundary tone (L%) is placed at sentence final position.

However, in English “the nuclear accent in wh-questions normally goes on the rightmost content word as in declaratives” (Ladd, 2008, p. 224). Ladd shows that English has, “Where are you GOING?”, rather than “WHERE are you going?” It means, in the sentence “Where are you going?”, a special neutral location for the main stress is “going” rather than “where” which indicates falling (HL%) boundary tone in the English wh-question.

As for the English wh-question spoken by SHB speakers, we realize that a significant influence of mother tongue intonation pattern falls on SHE. In the case of SHE wh-question, the prominence always falls on the wh-phrase rather than the rightmost content word, and low boundary tone (L%) is assigned rather than falling (HL%). The Intonation pattern of wh-question in SHE is shown in the following representatives of SHE wh-questions (Figure 6).

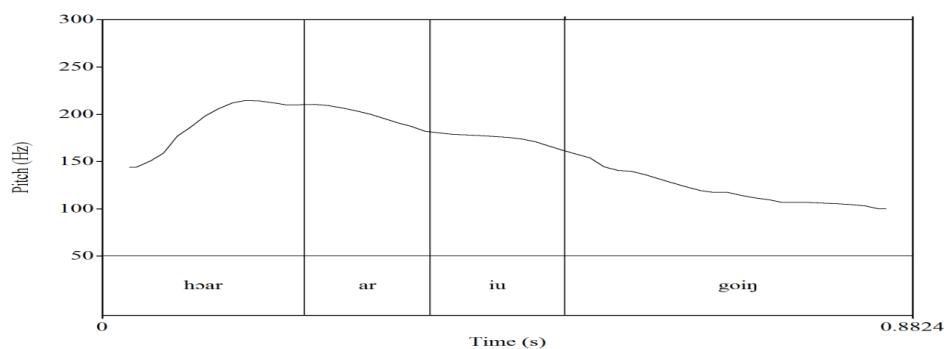


Figure 6. //ɔa ar iu goɪŋ// “Where are you going?”

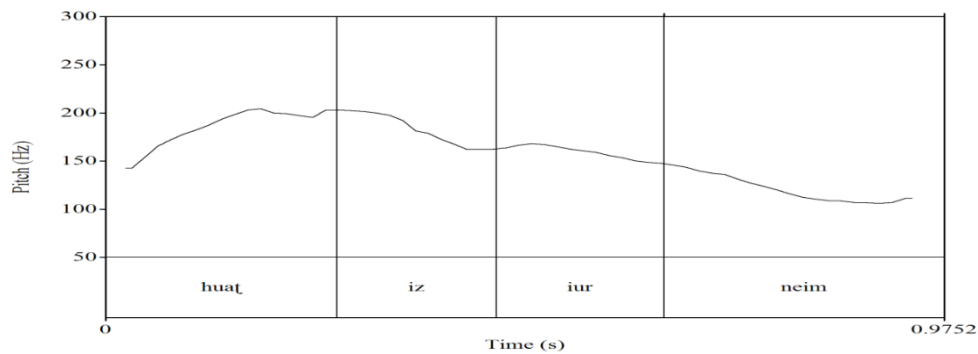


Figure 7 //uaɪ iz iur naɪm// “What is your name?”

Figures 6 and 7 show that SHB speakers give more prominence to wh-word “where” or “what” rather than the rightmost content word “go” or “name”, and they attach low boundary tone (L%) under the influence of their mother tongue intonation. So it can be said that the “error” made by SHB speakers is due to the interference of L1 with L2. The “incorrect” intonation pattern may also convey some kind of meaning, but it may not express the intended meaning and misunderstanding may easily take place. So there is a need for SHB speakers to learn proper intonation pattern of English.

### Recommendations

The results of the comparative study of English and SHB sounds help us to understand the factors regarding the errors committed by SHB speakers during their pronunciation of English words. While teaching English to SHB students the concerned teacher must keep in his/her mind some important points. Students should be aware of the fact that the application of mother tongue rules in the target language produces wrong structures. SHB students should be familiarized with the complex syllable structure of English including complex margins. Teachers should make SHE speakers refrain from using vowel epenthesis, initial or internal, as the latter distorts English complex margins. SHB learners of English should have proper knowledge of the function of /ə/ in English. Besides making the SHE speakers learn the rules, equal emphasis should be given on regular drills to maximize learners’ awareness about the differences between the native system and the target system.

For a learner of English to predict the stress pattern from a written form of the English word is a difficult task. On the contrary, native speakers do not face such problems as they are able to guess the stress pattern of unfamiliar words. It implies that there are some underlying rules of English stress system though these rules for stress are complex and have many exceptions. As English stress system is in part rule-governed so it is good for learners of English to learn the most useful patterns of English stress system. The guidelines are like traditional advice to non-native English learners for

memorizing the stress pattern of words when they learn and they must apply them. Since incorrect stress placement causes major intelligibility problems for foreign learners it needs to be treated seriously. Finding appropriate practice and testing materials for word stress is effective for use in the classroom.

So to remove the hindrances which SHB speakers face during their speaking in second language, the teacher should make SHB learners of English aware of the items of difference between the phonetics and phonology of the two systems and alert them about the L1 interference with L2. Therefore, the awareness of L1 and L2 phonological systems will be of immense help to improve second language learning. The appropriate application of the approaches mentioned above promises to improve pronunciation, stress placement, and intonation of SHB speakers. Besides learners of English, these pedagogical issues will be beneficial to the teachers, material producers, language planners, and researchers as well. A systematic analysis of the learners' errors will help in improving the status of the teaching-learning process compared to the one(s) that exists now.

## **Conclusion**

This paper offers a contrastive picture of SHB and English phonology to show how the differences create hindrances in the way of SHB speakers' learning of English correctly. In the process, it has highlighted the causes behind the systematic errors committed by SHB speakers. From the analysis of English data spoken by Sylheti speakers, it comes to the fore that while learning English, the properties of SHB phonology interfere with the phonology of English. Due to this interference, SHB speakers commit many errors in their spoken English.

The CA between SHB and English phonological properties will make the Sylheti learners of English aware of the divergences between their mother tongue and second language. This knowledge is sufficed to aid them to attenuate the gap between SHE and English and thus, making the SHB learners better users of English.

The study, nevertheless, has some limitations. It primarily exhibits the interference of Sylheti Bangla in learning English with regard to phonology. However, it is also observed that Sylheti speakers not only commit errors in the case of pronunciation but also in other areas such as in the use of English articles, and prepositions. The learners also face difficulties in constructing sentences. These errors indicate that besides phonological interference, English spoken by Sylheti speakers also encounters interference of L1 grammar, syntax, and morphology. Since the domain of this paper is exclusive to phonological interference, the potential examination of interference of L1 in other linguistic aspects can be studied in further research.

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