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## Voices of Future English Teachers: A Narrative Inquiry of Preservice Teachers' Experiences and Perceptions of World Englishes

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### Abstract

This study examines how pre-service English teachers' life experiences, beliefs, and identity conflicts influence their perceptions and understandings of World Englishes (WE). Using a qualitative method with a narrative inquiry approach, this study used interviews and reflective journals from four sixth-semester students of an English education program at one of the religiously based private universities in East Kalimantan. The findings were that WE understanding developed through exposure to media and personal experiences, as well as language skills courses. These pre-service English teachers perceived that WE is important for students and has a positive impact on students' language skills. Despite challenges, the pre-service English teachers were committed to creating an inclusive learning environment and valued the diversity of the English language. This research suggests further exploration of how World Englishes influence teachers' teaching practices.

**Keywords:** World Englishes; Experiences; Perceptions; Preservice English Teachers

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## 1. Introduction

British colonial expansion and cultural domination of English-speaking nations have contributed to the development of English into a worldwide language with numerous dialects, known as World Englishes (WEs) (Crystal, 2003). As a result of this spread, English encountered local languages and cultures in various parts of the world, leading to notable linguistic modifications. This led to the emergence of distinctive regional socio-cultural variances in syntax, lexicon, and pronunciation. A more inclusive and contextualized interpretation of English is replacing a monolithic one, as seen by this phenomenon (Kachru, 1985). In the end, the emergence of World Englishes represents a change in perspective toward acknowledging the diverse and culturally rich character of the English language in its globalized form.

Furthermore, it is critical to acknowledge that linguistic variety is only one aspect of English's development as a global language; other factors include shifts in communication



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styles. English speakers frequently use adaptable and flexible communication techniques in cross-cultural interactions, which deviate from native speakers' conventions. The term English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) refers to this situation, which prioritizes effective communication over adherence to conventional norms (Seidlhofer, 2011). The ELF approach emphasizes how crucial it is to learn how to communicate effectively in a variety of international settings with people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

Additionally, English's expansion as a worldwide language has been expedited by the advancement of information and communication technology. English speakers worldwide can now communicate and work together in new linguistically interactive places made possible by the internet and social media. As a result, new English dialects have emerged, reflecting the impact of digital culture and technology (Crystal, 2001). Therefore, the influence of technology on linguistic variety and communication behaviors must be taken into account when studying World English.

Furthermore, it is critical to take into account the effects of teaching native speaker norms in light of globalization. English speakers frequently converse with non-native speakers as well as native speakers in our increasingly interconnected society. As a result, knowing how to comprehend and interact with various English dialects is becoming more and more crucial. Effective cross-cultural contacts can be hampered, and communication gaps can result from ELT programs that ignore world Englishes (Seidlhofer, 2011). Thus, the identification and incorporation of World Englishes in English language teaching is not just an issue of linguistic fairness, but also a practical requirement in the era of globalization.

The spread of WE has a significant impact on English language learning, especially for preservice English teachers, as it helps them understand and appreciate the diversity of languages spoken around the world. By understanding the variety and contexts in which English is used, preservice English teachers can build teaching approaches that are more inclusive and responsive to the needs of students from different cultural backgrounds. This not only enriches their teaching methods, but also prepares them to face the difficulties of teaching English in a multicultural environment. Therefore, understanding WE is important for preservice English teachers if they want to make their students' learning experience useful and rewarding.

Pre-service teachers play a crucial role in shaping future English Language Teaching (ELT) practices. Their perceptions of WEs will significantly influence the way they teach and assess English in the classroom. Pre-service teachers' beliefs and understanding of global English varieties will determine whether they adopt an inclusive and contextualized approach or stick to traditional native-speaker norms (Borg, 2003). If pre-service teachers are taught to value and understand WEs, they are likely to create a more inclusive learning environment,



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where learners feel valued and motivated to use English in a variety of global communication contexts (Jenkins, 2009). Conversely, if pre-service teachers have a negative view of WEs, they are likely to emphasize conformity to native speaker norms, which may lead to feelings of inferiority in learners and hinder the development of effective communication skills (Matsuda, 2012). Therefore, teacher education programs need to actively integrate an understanding of WEs and ELF to equip pre-service teachers with the necessary knowledge and skills to teach English in diverse global contexts (Kirkpatrick, 2010).

Pre-service teachers' perceptions of WEs reveal that many of them are still unfamiliar with the diversity of the English language. According to Ates et al (2015), the majority of study participants lacked adequate knowledge of WEs, including accent variations, which makes training on WEs crucial. They suggested exposing pre-service teachers to a variety of English dialects and providing them with opportunities to interact with speakers from a range of linguistic backgrounds to improve their comprehension and recognition of English dialects and their users. Furthermore, while not all of the participants' opinions were significantly altered, the intervention activities in this study were effective in raising their awareness, tolerance, and respect for WEs. This implies that even with advancements, pre-service teachers are still not adequately prepared to handle the diversity of English in the classroom (Aminah et al., 2019; Arbain et al., 2017).

According to Galloway & Rose (2018), with a study entitled *Incorporating Global Englishes into the ELT Classroom*. As a result, this activity was effective in improving students' understanding, reducing their stereotypes about non-native languages, and increasing their confidence in communication (Arbain & Nur, 2017; Arbain & Rohman, 2023). To create an inclusive and global learning environment, this study emphasizes the use of student-centered learning approaches and the use of teaching materials that represent the diversity of the English language. Previous study by Fidan et al (2024), *Attitudes toward World Englishes and World Englishes-informed pedagogies among prospective ELT teachers in Türkiye*. Results showed that most participants had moderate views towards the plurilithicity of English before the course, but these views statistically increased after the course on WEs ( $p = .029$ ). Participants demonstrated an understanding of different variants of English and had different perceptions of speakers from inner, outer, and developing circles based on qualities, such as skill and social attractiveness. Overall, this study shows that WE-based pedagogy has a positive impact on prospective teachers' attitudes and awareness, and provides important insights into ELT in Turkey.

In this study, the researcher only limits some of the factors to be investigated that are thought to influence how WE implementation can be sustainable in the long term in the classroom, and the native speaker bias that is still strong among educators with systematically



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tested intervention strategies (Erliana & Arbain, 2020; Gracella & Rahman Nur, 2020). Both factors are used in this study because there are differences in influence between one researcher and another. This study examines pre-service English teacher at one of the religiously based private universities in East Kalimantan.

Based on the results of previous research, there are contradictions and further research should be conducted. The contradiction is on how the implementation of WE can be sustainable in the long term in the classroom and there is still a strong native speaker tendency among educators. The difference in this study is the experiences and perceptions of English teachers that shape the understanding of WE. The questions in this study are as follows: (1) How do preservice English teachers' perceptions of English varieties within the World Englishes framework affect their future planning and implementation of English language teaching?; (2) How do preservice English teachers' lived experiences and beliefs about World Englishes shape their understanding of inclusivity in English as a Foreign Language Teaching (EFLT) pedagogy?

## 2. Method

This study uses a qualitative method with a narrative inquiry approach to understand how pre-service English teachers' life experiences, implicit beliefs, and identity beliefs shape their understanding of WE. According to Gergen (2009), a narrative is a series of events told in a specific order that has audience meaning. Narrative research was chosen for its ability to capture the complexity of human experience through stories.

This research was conducted on sixth-semester students of the English education study program at one of the religiously based private universities in East Kalimantan. Four sixth semester students who have completed the microteaching course. Data collection techniques in this study were using interviews and reflective journals. The researcher used semi-structured interviews to collect data. In the reflective journal, pre-service English teachers kept a journal to reflect on their experiences and thoughts about WE.

In the technique of analyzing data, researchers use techniques according to Connelly & Clandinin (2012), there are several steps to analyze narrative inquiry data, namely: (1) The researcher reads and interprets the collected stories to understand the context and meaning contained in them; (2) The analysis is carried out by considering the three dimensions of the inquiry space, namely relational, temporal, and continuous; (3) The researcher creates a narrative by connecting the participants' experiences with the broader social and cultural context; and (4) The researcher connects the research results with relevant theories to gain a better understanding of the events under study.



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In addition, the researcher also used thematic analysis in the reflective journal. Reflective journals are useful for preservice English teachers on how they can express and reflect on their lives with WE. The following are the steps of the researcher analyzing the reflective journals: (1) The researcher collected each reflective journal to be analyzed; (2) The researcher read each journal to get a good understanding of its content and context; (3) The researcher wrote down the main themes or issues, such as experiences or problems encountered; (4) The researcher coded the predetermined themes to facilitate grouping; (5) After coding, the researcher searched for codes or similarities in journals with the same theme; (6) The researcher wrote a summary of each theme, providing an explanation of its meaning and implications; (7) Finally, the researcher made a brief report that included the main findings and thoughts about the experience. A series of qualitative strategies were used in the narrative inquiry research entitled "Voices of Future English Teachers: A Narrative Inquiry into Preservice Teachers' Experiences and Perceptions of World Englishes" to enhance the credibility of the research.

### **3. Findings and Discussion**

The findings of the study were based on two main questions: (1) How do preservice English teachers' perceptions of English varieties within the World Englishes framework affect their future planning and implementation of English language teaching? And (2) How do preservice English teachers' lived experiences and beliefs about World Englishes shape their understanding of inclusivity in English as a Foreign Language Teaching (EFLT) pedagogy?

#### **3.1. Preservice English Teachers' Perceptions of English Varieties Within the World Englishes Framework Affect Their Future Planning and Implementation of English Language Teaching**

##### **3.1.1. Development of Understanding of English Variation**

This section presents preservice English teachers' understanding of English varieties. Preservice English teachers were asked how they understood World Englishes. Their responses varied. P1 became aware of English variation during junior high school after watching Harry Potter with a British accent. P2 became aware of it when interacting with an aunt who was married to a foreigner and also through English music. P3 had attended school in Malaysia so she often heard English and Malay conversations. P4 became aware of variations such as American and British in high school, having previously only known English as one form. This understanding then developed rapidly during university studies

*... There are two courses that made me realize the variety of English, namely reading and writing. Because I like to write fiction so from writing in English, I know that if you want*



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*to write in English, the structure is like this. And reading it turns out that in English there are several kinds and types. (P1's Interview, May 14, 2025)*

The participants' responses to the development of English varieties were in line with other participants' similar answers. The participants felt that classes such as reading, listening, and writing helped to improve their understanding of English variety has grown a lot. Kirkpatrick (2010) states that teacher education programs need to integrate an understanding of WE and ELF to equip pre-service teachers with the knowledge and skills needed to actively teach English in diverse global settings.

### **3.1.2. Vision of Teaching English as a Flexible Communication Tool**

The participants agreed that understanding WE is very important for a future English teacher. They believe that teachers should be role models for students and should be able to appreciate different varieties of English, not just British or American ones. This understanding is crucial as English is increasingly globalized, and teachers must prepare their students to face the world without relying on a single speaker.

*... As a future English teacher, I feel I have a responsibility to introduce students to the diverse reality of English. I will invite students to discuss and also explore several varieties of English and understand them to make them more open to diversity. (P4's Journal, May 16, 2025).*

According to Good & Brophy (1994), an effective teacher is an active educator who maximizes time in the classroom, presents material in ways that meet students' needs, monitors programs and progress, and creates opportunities for students to apply newly learned concepts and skills. The participants hoped to teach English as a flexible communication tool, not as a standardized version. In the past, teaching materials and methods reflected the belief that American and British native speaker models were the ideal standard (Kachru, 1985). In the context of international communication, these variants do, nonetheless, have linguistic validity and significance.

### **3.1.3. The Concrete Teaching Strategy**

To integrate the understanding of world English into teaching practice, the participants planned some concrete strategies such as providing materials in the form of interesting audio or video recordings. In addition, P2 also suggested the discussion method to understand the variety of English.

*... For me, I will provide materials in the form of interesting things, such as audio-audio or video pieces. And I prefer to use the discussion method because from there they can understand the variety of English. (P2's Interview, May 14, 2025).*



Based on the results of the interview with P2, it can be seen that implementing audio-visual learning media can foster student enthusiasm for learning. As Kesumadewi, Agung, & Rati (2020) mentioned that it is to foster students' enthusiasm, innovations that are different from usual are needed so that learning can foster an atmosphere of enthusiastic learning. Therefore, implementing audio-visual learning media can foster student enthusiasm for learning. Rahman (2018) said that audio-visual media can be a means of presenting material that is well packaged and interesting, so that it is easy for students to understand. In addition to providing audio visual learning, P2 will also use the discussion method, with this discussion method students can work together to exchange ideas to achieve a common goal. Nasution, (1995) suggested that group discussion is a method in which individuals establish relationships and collaborate with other individuals to achieve common goals (Nur, 2020; Nur & Jamilah, 2022).

#### **3.1.4. Positive Impact on Students' English Proficiency**

In this section the participants observed the positive impact of exposure to different varieties of English on the students' four English language skills. The participants' answers were unified that in terms of listening skills, students can get used to hearing different accents such as American, British, Indian, etc., so that they do not only rely on common accents. With this exposure students can also recognize and understand different types of speakers. As Walker (2022) says to improve students' listening comprehension skills being exposed to a wide variety of spoken English inevitably means students need to understand speakers whose accents are not the same as their own, where students need to be more open-minded and develop greater flexibility in making decisions about what they listen to and also be more accepting of different varieties of English.

Also in terms of speaking, this exposure can give students the confidence to use their own accent or variation as part of their identity, or can motivate them to recognize other variations. Therefore, students become less rigid and more confident. In terms of reading, students can gain new understanding through the spelling of different speakers by analyzing the distinctive features of a particular speaker's writing. Finally, in terms of writing, students will gain new knowledge about vocabulary that is different but has the same meaning (for example, the difference in variation between British and American). Incorporating varieties of English from around the world into the ELT classroom can increase students' awareness and positive attitude towards language diversity (Galloway & Rose, 2018).



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### **3.2. Preservice English Teachers' Life Experiences and Beliefs about World Englishes in Shaping Understanding of EFLT Inclusivity**

The following themes investigate how the participants' personal experiences and beliefs about world Englishes shaped their views on the importance of inclusivity in foreign English language teaching (EFLT) pedagogy:

#### **3.1.2. Personal Interaction Experiences as Shaping Inclusive Views**

In this section, the participants' various personal interactions with English speakers from different backgrounds were important experiences that shaped their views on the diversity of English and the importance of inclusivity. P1 had an experience with Malaysian exchange students in elementary school, where English was spoken with a Malay accent and even mixed with an Indian accent. From this experience, P1 realized that mixed accents in English are not a problem as long as the understanding and usage are correct. P2 often communicates with her aunt who is married to an outsider, besides that P2 has also used applications that make friends with people from various countries. P2 admits that the British accent is sometimes difficult to understand, while the Indian accent is easier to understand.

Similarly, P3 has experience studying in Malaysia and often watches Malay movies and interacts with English speakers who have Indian and Chinese accents on OmeTV. P3 found it fun and had a positive outlook despite the need for adjustment. Similar to the previous participant, P4 interacted with Russians and Turks through online applications. P4 found it strange and had to be extra understanding as they were not native speakers, but this experience shaped her view of world English.

Based on the participants' experiential interviews, there are distinctive socio-cultural differences in syntax, lexicon, and pronunciation. As seen in this phenomenon, more inclusive and contextualized interpretations replace monolithic ones (Kachru, 1985). Ultimately the emergence of world English represents a change in perspective to recognize the diverse and culturally rich character of English in its globalized form. In addition, the expansion of English as a worldwide language has been accelerated by advances in information and communication technology. English speakers around the world can now communicate and work together in new linguistically interactive venues made possible by the internet and social media. As a result, new English dialects are emerging that reflect the impact of digital culture and technology (Crystal, 2001). Therefore, the influence of technology on linguistic variation and communication behaviour must be taken into account when studying world English.

#### **3.2.2. Strategies for Overcoming Challenges and Promoting Inclusivity**

In this section participants identified some of the challenges that might be encountered and ways to overcome the challenges in teaching WE, especially with regard to students'





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misconceptions about the “correct” variation and the tendency to imitate one speaker. In this section the participants had similar answers, in that the participants would intercede to provide a gradual and slow understanding of the English language variety. In order to provide a learning environment that is inclusive and in line with the reality of global communication in the modern world, a paradigm shift is needed to recognize and appreciate English variation. Otherwise, learners find ELT programs that focus on native speaker norms irrelevant as they often ignore the cultural background and local communication needs. In addition, these strategies can inhibit the growth of native speakers' linguistic identity and maintain linguistic and cultural gaps (Canagarajah, 2005). Therefore, ELT needs a more inclusive and contextualized approach that respects the diversity of English and enables non-native speakers to use the language well in their environment.

Although the overall perception of preservice English teachers towards WE is positive, the findings of the interviews also revealed some negative impacts that may arise in teaching practice. One of them is students' misconceptions about the “correct” accent and their tendency to stick to one variety of English. If teachers demand that students use one particular speaker, this can discourage students from learning. In addition, preservice English teachers will also face the challenge of generalizing all students' understanding of the variety. They also face the problem of understanding students' regional accents, which can interfere with communication. In addition, some participants' personal experiences show that they face difficulties in understanding non-native speakers with inappropriate grammar, which causes confusion.

#### **4. Conclusion**

This study investigates how pre-service English teachers understand and perceive World Englishes (WE) and its influence on the teaching of pre-service English teachers in the future. Using a qualitative method with a narrative inquiry approach, this study found that WE understanding develops through media exposure and personal experience. In addition, the four skill courses such as listening, reading, speaking and writing were specifically mentioned as helping to increase their awareness of English varieties. The pre-service English teachers recognized the importance of WE in the future and planned to integrate it through audio/video materials and discussions which were expected to increase students' enthusiasm for the subject. Exposure to a wide variety of English was also observed to have a positive impact on all four of the students' language skills, including the ability to listen to a wide variety of accents, confidence in speaking, reading comprehension through typical spelling, and acquisition of new vocabulary in writing. Despite challenges such as stereotyping, pre-service English teachers are committed to providing an inclusive learning environment in the future and valuing the diversity of the English language.



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For the English Education Program, the researcher suggests that the program curriculum effectively incorporates the concept of WE into the core curriculum. This means not only teaching theory, but also equipping prospective teachers with concrete strategies to introduce and celebrate different accents and varieties of English usage in the classroom. Providing preservice English teachers with authentic materials from different parts of the world and giving them opportunities to interact with speakers from different backgrounds will go a long way in helping them build adaptability and understanding of the realities of English use around the world. In addition, the researcher also suggests that preservice English teachers should always actively develop their understanding of WE through constant exposure to various language varieties and accents. Preservice English teachers should foster students' confidence in speaking English with their own variety and prioritize effective communication and clarity over accent perfection. In the future, they will directly gain assistance in implementing inclusive pedagogy by implementing practices such as keeping reflective journals and creating classroom activities that celebrate the diversity of English.

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