

Exploring Saudi University English Teachers' Perceptions of Global Englishes

Mohammed Aldawsari¹

¹ Department of English, College of Science and Humanities, Prince Sattam Bin Abdulaziz University, Saudi Arabia

Correspondence: Mohammed Aldawsari, Department of English Language, College of Science and Humanities at Al-Aflaj, Prince Sattam Bin Abdulaziz University, Saudi Arabia.

Received: October 10, 2022

Accepted: November 10, 2022

Online Published: November 10, 2022

doi:10.5430/wjel.v12n8p426

URL: <https://doi.org/10.5430/wjel.v12n8p426>

Abstract

This paper aims to explore the paradigm of Global Englishes through the perceptions held towards it by university English teachers in Saudi Arabia. Due to reasons, such as globalization and colonization, the presence of English can be found in all countries throughout the world. Some countries, such as Saudi Arabia have not yet fully institutionalized the language which places them in the expanding circle, where English is currently seen and pedagogically taught as a foreign language. There are currently more non-native speakers of English than native English speakers worldwide, presenting a wide array of English varieties, influenced by native languages and local dialects. International teachers and students of English have presented a common theme and that is their desire to speak English with native like proficiency. Thus, in turn, the current method through which English language teaching takes place is typically a standard nativism approach using American or British English as a benchmark. The concern is that the standard nativism model may not accurately reflect the variety of English that is practiced and used specifically in Saudi Arabia in the case of this study, nor within the world as countless people use English as their second or even third language. Global Englishes offers a diversified and inclusive way of accepting varieties of English and it offers a framework for English to be taught within. The current study sought to explore the perceptions held by Saudi university teachers towards Global Englishes. The study made use of focus group interview discussions with university English teachers in Saudi Arabia from which three dominant themes emerged through thematic analysis. Firstly, it was clear that the teachers were not fully aware of the notion of Global Englishes before the study, and therefore did not realize that alternative methods of English language teaching were being developed to include and accept different varieties of English. In addition, the teachers did not view Global Englishes as a legitimate framework for teaching English, for reasons such as it navigates from the “pure” form of standard English. In conclusion, the teachers seemed to be some-what apprehensive about incorporating Global Englishes into their teaching curriculum. Similar results have been found in other studies of a comparable nature.

Keywords: Global Englishes, English as a Lingua Franca, English language teaching, expanding circle, non-native English speakers, Saudi English

1. Introduction

The linguistic landscape of the world is in dire need of a pedagogical shift towards a more inclusive and culturally varied manner of communication. English has been internationally claimed as a Lingua Franca (ELF) which has encompassed numerous non-native English speakers to learn the language in order to be linguistically included with the rapid and changing effects of globalization. This has led to the emergence of an indefinite number of English varieties being spoken throughout the world (Jenkins, Modiano & Seidlhofer, 2001; Jenkins & Leung, 2013). According to Crystal (2003), there are now more non-native English speakers than native English speakers. These varieties have been classified under the broad over-arching label of “Global Englishes,” which authentically represents both the practical and cultural use of English across diverse societies today. The spreading dimension of Global Englishes has become a topical discussion amongst researchers. English language use and proficiency throughout the world can be divided into three “circles”; the inner circle where English is taught and learnt as a first/native language, the outer circle where English is incorporated as a second language and in cases a recognized medium of instruction and finally the expanding circle, where English is rarely used and maintains a foreign status (Kachru, 1986). Saudi Arabia falls within the expanding circle, which is why this research is imperative.

1.1 Significance of the Study

The dominant language spoken throughout Saudi Arabia is Arabic and the general level of English proficiency is statistically very low (EF English Proficiency Index, 2019). Saudi Arabia falls within the expanding circle of English language learning and aptitude. This study seeks to see whether English teachers in Saudi Arabia are aware of Global Englishes and if they are, do they accept it as a legitimate model or approach to language teaching. This study also offers insight as to whether these teachers would be open to practicing within the pedagogical tenets of this model. The standard nativism approach to teaching English is time consuming and difficult for non-native speakers to learn. As such, the standard nativism model of teaching English, which is currently being used in Saudi universities, maintains

its legitimacy and place within academic learning. However, it is important that awareness is raised about other options and approaches that are available for English language learning and teaching. This study offers significantly important information surrounding Saudi university English teachers' awareness of the notion of Global Englishes and the possibility of its induction into the syllabus and currently used model of English language teaching. A considerable amount of time is invested by both teachers and learners on trying to achieve a "native-like" level of English proficiency, where this may not always be necessary and instead more time can rather be spent on learning the content and subject matter of the various courses the students are learning, such as science and mathematics. Global Englishes offers an internationally accepted and widely used form of English which does not revolve around "perfect native English" speaking, but rather on mutual intelligibility across a diverse range of native and non-native English speakers throughout the world (Galloway & Rose, 2015, 2018; Sewell, 2013).

1.2 Objective of the Study

This study seeks to understand the perceptions of tertiary English teachers of Global Englishes in Saudi Arabia. English is currently being taught as a standard and foreign language to Saudi university students. The paradigm of Global Englishes is still new and there is currently plenty of research underway and its relevance to the Saudi context is vitally important. There is a new sociolinguistic reality of English where it is being spoken more by non-native speakers of English than native speakers (Crystal, 2003). This alternative form of English learning and teaching cannot be neglected as the practice of English throughout the world is changing, new non-native varieties are being recognized and it is important to see whether Saudi teachers are aware of this or not. Saudi Arabia is classified as being a part of the expanding circle regarding English practice and it has not yet been established as an official language. There are currently multiple English language learning programs available especially at a tertiary level, yet up until now the overall proficiency amongst Saudi students still remains low and short of what is desired. Global Englishes is a framework that allows students to learn and be exposed to varieties of English other than the standard normative model. This study intends to offer insight as to whether English teachers in the Saudi context, at a tertiary level, are aware of such alternative methods in aiding their students to learn English with the outcome of being understandable by native and other non-native speakers alike.

1.3 Research Questions

Based on the aforementioned introduction and in order to achieve its objectives, the following research questions are attempted to be answered in this study:

1. Are Saudi university English teachers aware of Global Englishes?
2. Do they accept it as a legitimate framework to teach English to non-native speakers within?
3. Would Saudi university teachers restructure their teaching framework and model to incorporate Global Englishes?

The remainder of this article is structured as follows: Section 2 presents the literature review as well as some previous studies pertinent to the topic under investigation. Section 3 is the methodology of the study, wherein the context of the study, its design, and the data collection and analytical procedures are provided. Section 4 offers the results of the study. Section 5 discusses the results. Section 6 concludes the study and offers some recommendations for further research.

2. Review of Literature

The role that the English language plays in the world is constantly transforming (Jenkins & Leung, 2013). Over the past 30 years, a significant amount of intensive research has been targeted towards gaining a greater understanding of how English has functionally transformed into a variety of Global Englishes. A considerable amount of research has been initiated with the intention of understanding people's perceptions and awareness of the existence of alternative methods of English language teaching, to that of the standard nativism model. The phenomenon of seeing English as a Lingua Franca is by no means new, yet the incorporation of this modern and alternative pedagogy into tertiary English learning programs has recently been gaining traction internationally (Galloway & Rose, 2014). Countries where English is viewed as a foreign language, and is taught as such, should be looking to explore alternative and additional methods of English language teaching to aid their students in reaching an understandable level of English proficiency.

In order to gain a better perspective of how English has been so disparately practiced throughout the world, Kachru (1986) suggested the concept of concentric circles. Countries are therefore classified as falling within the inner, outer or expanding circles. The inner circle offers a traditional basis of English learning as a mother tongue. This is apparent in countries such as England, America, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. This differs from the English practice in the outer circle where English is a traditionally institutionalized medium of communication and commonly learnt as an early second language. Countries qualifying for this circle are India, Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya, Pakistan, among others (Morrow, 2004). This is historically a result of years of colonization passing through the countries, leading to new varieties of English being formed (Jenkins, 2014). The expanding circle is represented by countries where English is seen as a foreign language and it is primarily allocated for the use of international communication, yet the proficiency levels in these countries are weak. This circle includes countries, such as China, Japan, Saudi Arabia, among others. The expanding circle accounts for more non-native speakers of English opposed to the number of native and second language speakers of English throughout the world (Javid, Al-Asmari, & Farooq, 2012). One can therefore recognize that English is a language that is not under the ownership of one nation in comparison to another (Widdowson, 1994; Crystal, 2003), yet the policy under which it is implemented will determine the level of intelligibility amongst non-native speakers with the rest of the world. This inconsistent adoption of English amongst countries all functioning within the same global discourse has fortified the need to find an intelligible consensus, and this is one of the notions that Global Englishes offers. The idea

of a recognizing English as a global language can best be described by (Crystal, 2003; Jenkins, 2007) where we recognize that English plays a “special” role in every country in the world. English is taught either at a school or tertiary level and traditionally it has been taught according to standardized norms. An important factor to consider at this point is that the native cultural and linguistic landscapes differ dramatically across all of these countries where English is being taught as a second or (in the expanding circle) as a foreign language and this will influence the manner in which English is taught and learnt. Therefore, one should consider that the standard nativism model of English teaching may not always be the most suitable approach for all non-native English learners. We cannot deny the role this standard nativism model plays nor the way it maintains its need; yet, it is also possible that a pedagogical shift is taking place in the world and new approaches to teaching English to non-native speakers is on the horizon (Deniz Biricik, Özkan, & Bayyurt, 2016 ; Fang & Ren, 2018).

Departments and ministries of education in non-native English-speaking countries are all faced with similar dilemmas regarding English language teaching. On the one hand, they want to effectively equip their learners with what is internationally believed to be the best model of English so that their students can reach a globally accepted level of proficiency (Ghobain, 2010); yet, on the other hand, they too want to honor their respective linguistic settings and have their country’s unique culture translated through the content and method of teaching. The problem arises where not enough awareness has been created about alternative models from the standard nativism teaching approach, and it is important for those with the resources to enact change to become aware that the nativism approach is not always appropriate both linguistically and culturally for international communities. This is the case in Saudi Arabia (Aldawsari & Karakas, 2021), an expanding circle country where students are taught English according to a standard native model with content typically designed by inner-circle native English speakers. It is possible that a useful alternative may yield better results. Students should be given a variety of options and choices regarding the position of English proficiency or understandability they wish to reach; this could also depend on the type of career or industry they would possibly like to enter. In saying this, Saudi Arabia has been admired in their commitment to developing their own human resources of teachers and this includes those who teach English. A sufficient number of them are therefore non-native speakers of English themselves. However, the number of students enrolling to learn English has increased and therefore outnumbered the number of local teachers thus calling for the hiring of foreign nationals to join Saudi universities and teach English. The majority of these foreign nationals, as will be seen throughout the current study, come from different non-native English-speaking countries, which creates a diverse and linguistically rich learning environment representing non-native English varieties that the students are exposed to. Yet, both teachers and students are all still teaching and learning according to a standard nativism model (Aldawsari & Karakas, 2021; Ghobain, 2010).

Research is continuously being done within expanding circle countries on the perceptions and understandings of Global Englishes and English varieties. Such studies are all contributing towards understanding whether the incorporation of a Global Englishes teaching approach can replace or complement the currently used approach of standard native English teaching. We found that studies done by other researchers, also in expanding countries yielded similar inferences regarding the teachers’ and students’ perceptions and specifically their attitudes towards the idea of Global Englishes. In the Japanese context (classified as a part of the expanding circle), Galloway & Rose (2014) conducted a study with the aim to increase university students’ awareness on the diversity of English. Their teachers felt that there was a discrepancy between what the students needed out of the English language course, and what they were receiving. The intention was to gauge the linguistic opinions of the students and value their multilingualism. Through the listening of different audio recordings of English speakers (both native and non-native), the results showed that the students held a negative perception towards non-native speakers of English, just like themselves, and they showed a preference to the American English speaker referring to them as using “perfect English”. Interestingly enough though, after the study was completed, when asked in an evaluation, students’ perceptions had changed and there was an increased interest in learning more about different varieties of English used internationally, this was a result from the linguistic exposure they experienced. A similar trend was seen in Rahayu’s (2020) study, that focused solely on teachers’ perceptions on teaching English as a Lingua Franca in Indonesia (also a part of the expanding circle). The data collection was done through the use of a questionnaire and results showed that the standard nativism approach was favored by teachers as a continued framework for English language teaching. It was clear that the teachers had a very low sense of awareness about teaching English as a Lingua Franca and many of them were not able to explain it. However, after being more exposed to and learning about the concept of Global Englishes, they seemed more inclined to know even more and were open minded to the idea of “modifying the rules of standard English.

The standard nativism approach to teaching English to non-native speakers is well supported by teachers and ministries. In Singapore, a movement by the name of “Speak Good English” was started to raise awareness of the need for Singapore students to actively strive towards native-like proficiency. Interestingly enough, this movement was posed to Japanese university students as part of a Global Englishes awareness task and the Japanese students opposed the movement and showed support towards the learning of the Singapore variety of English: “Singlish” (Rose & Galloway, 2017). This study suggests that thorough correct exposure and with the aid of informative materials and tools, both students and teachers internationally may become more invested in exploring the Global Englishes paradigm. Fang and Ren (2018) conducted a study in China, where instead of exploring the teachers’ awareness of Global Englishes they chose to investigate the students’ awareness of the concept and its implications. The students involved in the study were given the option to enroll in an additional English language course at university. The course was designed by Jenkins (2014) and presented ways for students to engage with different English varieties, language policy and planning and this was done in a Chinese setting. The students were asked their opinions of the English language prior to the course and after the course they were assessed through discussions and reflective journals. The students’ admitted that they try to imitate native-like speakers when they speak English and they had a distorted perception of Global Englishes and the varieties it encompasses. After the course though, their perceptions had evolved positively, and they acknowledged that they should not “judge local

accents". They had a new-found appreciation for English varieties and the importance of mutual intelligibility over native-like perfection. Another study that was conducted in Taiwan by (Lai, 2008) found through the use of focus group interviews that university English teachers had mixed attitudes towards the notion of teaching English as a Lingua Franca instead of sticking to the standard nativism model, and their concrete awareness of using English as a Lingua Franca teaching model was low. A significant number of the teachers, however, believed that their students needed to strive to speak "American English" which according to their perceptions seemed to be the ideal English.

Global trends have also seen an increase in non-native English-speaking students travelling to inner circle countries to study English there. This is seen as a way to achieve a native-like proficiency in English and some believe that the immersed and integrated linguistic environment contributes to better language learning (Sadeghpour & Sharifian, 2017). Australia is one of these inner circle countries where students from varied nationalities go to study English, a research study on Global Englishes was therefore conducted in this context. Sadeghpour and Sharifian (2017), conducted this study that sought to explore whether these English teachers were aware of Global Englishes (World Englishes) and to see whether they believed it was a legitimate framework. Through structured focus groups, multi-national English teachers were asked their opinions on this new paradigm. The results showed that majority of the teachers were not able to offer a definition of World Englishes which suggested they did not have a great understanding or awareness of what it was. After becoming more aware, the general consensus was that expanding circle English varieties were not considered to be legitimate varieties. Results from a Deniz Biricik et al's (2016) study in Turkey also pointed towards hesitation as a perception the English teachers held when asked their opinions on teaching English as a Lingua Franca.

Whilst multiple studies have been and are continuously being done on Global Englishes across expanding circle countries, little research has up till now been conducted in the Saudi context. Almegren (2018) states that a minimal amount of research has been done on the awareness of Global Englishes in the Saudi context and this is further supported by Mahboob and Elyas (2014) who in addition claim that there is a "dearth of research" on the Saudi English variety. They also imply that a great deal of research has been done on the politics of the English language in Saudi Arabia, but not as much on the way it has been taught and whether the standard nativism approach is still the best option available to Saudi teachers and students. There is currently a divide in the role that English plays in Saudi Arabia broadly speaking. There is the educational and administrative context which heavily relies on standard English and then there are the English varieties which differ to the standard variety in terms of register, style, pronunciation and accentuation (Al-Asmari & Khan, 2014). These English varieties are the forms of English that are practiced and spoken every day amongst Saudi non-native speakers of English. Within the Saudi education system, English is taught as a foreign language according to a strictly governed set of rules, yet it is practiced as a variety that has been adapted and localized to Saudi Arabia in reality. It is therefore important to see whether incorporating a Global Englishes curriculum where students are more exposed to their own and international varieties of English would lead to an advantageous outcome in mutual intelligibility. Other countries have accepted and embraced their variety of English such as "Hinglish" in India and "Singlish" in Singapore (Al-Asmari & Khan, 2014) and the linguistic landscape in Saudi Arabia offers evidence that more research must be done to understand the Saudi English variety. Unfortunately, there is a gap in our current knowledge surrounding this topic in a Saudi context and this study will contribute towards filling this gap by taking the first step in exploring whether the notion of Global Englishes is privy knowledge to Saudi English teachers or not.

3. Methodology

3.1 Study Context

The purpose of this research is to gain a sound understanding of how Saudi English teachers view and understand the concept of Global Englishes. These teachers teach English as an elected course at a university level to students who enroll with aims of improving their proficiency in the language. Statistically, Saudi university students who take international English proficiency tests present very low scores (EF English Proficiency Index, 2019). Seeing as Saudi Arabia is a part of the emerging circle, the use of English and daily exposure to it remains constricted. The Saudi government and various tertiary institutions have invested effective resources towards helping these students reach a level of English proficiency, yet the outcome is still relatively unsatisfactory compared to the desired goals (Aldawsari & Karakas, 2021). According to Jenkins et al. (2001), one of the primary goals of all non-native English speakers is to be mutually intelligible with other native and non-native English speakers.

3.2 Research Design

This study was conducted in a qualitative manner in order to gain a viable insight into Saudi English teachers' opinions on Global Englishes. The objective was to gain a better idea of the perceptions that Saudi university teachers hold regarding the concept of Global Englishes, whether they deem Global Englishes to be a legitimate framework for English language teaching, as well as their opinions on possibly incorporating this new approach into their current teaching framework. The methodological framework incorporated focus group interviews as a tool to gather information and insights from the qualifying participants. Focus group interviews as a research approach offers authentic and honest responses to questions and comments (Cohen & Garrett, 1999; Greenbaum, 1998; Ho, 2006; Ward, Bertrand & Brown, 1991). There are advantages to using focus group interviews as a method of collecting data as it naturally generates scientific debate amongst participants which creates invaluable data. It also creates a scenario where participants are able to interact with one another's opinions and views, which in turn leads to more adamant and truly authentic responses. Vague opinions and assertions are suppressed allowing more insightful responses to be observed (Morgan, 1996). An additional strength that this research design holds is the role the researcher is able to play throughout the process, where participants' personal experiences and views on the subject matter can be comfortably revealed to the researcher upon request. Seeing as the current study is exploratory in nature and is grounded on the natural perceptions that Saudi teachers

hold, focus group interviews is believed to be an effective tool to gain an authentic and versatile understanding of the teachers' awareness of Global Englishes.

3.3 Population and Sample

A total of 38 participants took part in the study. All of the participants were of different nationalities and were themselves non-native speakers of English. The respective nationalities were Indian, Pakistani, Jordanian, Yemeni, Moroccan, Egyptian, Sudanese and Saudis. This offers the sample a broad range of cultural diversity and linguistic variety. All of the participants who took part in the research held either Masters or PhD degrees in an array of English disciplines. All of the participants currently teach English to university students in Saudi Arabia. The participants had a varied amount of experience in English teaching in their own countries as well as in Saudi Arabia with at least a minimum of 2 years of experience.

3.4 Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

The data was collected through the conduction of small and carefully structured focus group interview discussions. Each focus group had approximately 12 to 13 participants present, and the duration of each discussion was 1 hour. In these discussions, the researcher posed the participants with a variety of questions which sparked scientific and topical discussions surrounding thematic concepts relating to Global Englishes. Three main themes emerged throughout the discussions as a result of three over-arching leading questions. The first main question asked whether the participants were aware of the concept of Global Englishes. Thereafter, depending on the nature of the answers that emerged, the researcher offered the teachers a broad explanation of the paradigm and asked if they then believed it was a legitimate framework for teaching English to non-native speakers. The third leading question asked the participants whether they would be inclined to incorporate or practice within this framework in their own teachings.

The data was thereafter analyzed using a qualitative thematic analysis approach. This approach is believed to be appropriate as it allows one to organize responses according to patterns and themes that arise through observation, typically within a focus group interview setting. Qualitative thematic analysis is a multidisciplinary technique that offers verifiable and systematic outcomes (Boyatzis, 1998).

4. Results

The responses obtained from the focus group discussions were categorized according to broad themes that contribute to answering the research questions. The participants were first asked whether they were or were not aware of the concept of Global Englishes. Several participants (who were all involved in English language teaching at a Saudi university) revealed a lack of awareness of the concept. They offered their best understanding of the concept however these definitions were inaccurate. One participant said that Global Englishes referred to English being the language of communication used in international organizations such as the United Nations. This seemed to be a mutual understanding and majority of the responses and discussions followed in a similar direction. Terms such as "language of communication", "international language" and "international institutions" were commonly mentioned. However, majority of their responses did not incorporate a crucial element of Global Englishes which was the inclusion of international varieties of English, varieties that are different to native norms. Some of the participants believed that the term Global Englishes referred to the use of English as an "international language". While this response is not necessarily untrue, it does not efficiently satisfy the definition and complexity of the Global Englishes framework. Out of the 38 participants there was however one teacher who offered a correct definition. This particular participant had a background in sociolinguistics and interestingly waited until the other participants had offered their views first before he offered his understanding. He suggested that Global Englishes incorporated the recognition and acceptance of different varieties of English, he specifically mentioned "Egyptian English" (he was an Egyptian national) as an example. This finding is interesting as it shows how purposeful exposure to Global Englishes is a key element in having a sound understanding of it.

After the researcher was able to establish the collective understanding each group had of Global Englishes, he offered the participants a correct and widely accepted explanation of what Global Englishes refers to. This created a platform for the researcher to then ask the participants whether they believed the Global Englishes framework was a legitimate approach to teaching English to non-native speakers. The general consensus suggested that the participants did not believe that the notion of Global Englishes held legitimacy according to their knowledge of the framework. The same participant who offered a correct definition of Global Englishes at the beginning of the discussion criticized the legitimacy of Global Englishes and suggested that the standard nativism model should be retained. Participants showed support for the standard nativism approach to language teaching which they are currently practicing. This standard nativism approach to teaching English was referred to as "fixed", "accurate English", "the pure language" and "not dynamic". It appeared that the participants either favored the American variety or the British variety of English. However, the majority showed a preference towards the British variety of English and this was specifically common with the older teachers whose countries of origin share history with British colonization such as India, Pakistan and Sudan.

The participants were thereafter asked whether they would consider incorporating Global Englishes into their current teaching practices, to which there was a collective response that they would not. They would prefer to stick to the nativism model and continue to encourage their students to seek native-like perfection. This result follows the fact that several of them believed Global Englishes lacked legitimacy, according to their knowledge. Throughout the course of the discussion an interesting topic emerged. After the participants stated their preference to continue teaching the standard nativism model of English to their students based on reasons that it is fixed, pure and the only legitimate option, the researcher asked the participants which dialect of Arabic should be taught across different middle eastern countries. The intention was to see whether some of the participants would stay true to their opinions that only standard models of languages should be

taught, or whether varieties of languages should in fact be accepted and explored in accordance with Global Englishes. In response to this, one of the participants justified their opinion by stating that it is similar to teaching our native language Arabic. He stated that standard Arabic should be taught to foreigners across all Arab countries, instead of local dialects and varieties. Such a response shows that the idea of not straying away from a standard version of a language, not just English seems to be a strongly supported opinion.

5. Discussion

This study investigates the perceptions held by Saudi university English teachers on the concept of Global Englishes. Jenkins (2013) eloquently suggests that Global Englishes refers to the international varieties of English that have emerged and are functionally spoken in practice all over the world. Linguistically, the world has been divided into three circles of English proficiency: the inner, outer and expanding circles (Kachru, 1986). The participants who took part in the study were representatives from countries that fall either within the outer or expanding circles. Thus, none of the participants were themselves native speakers of English. They all teach diverse English language courses to university students in Saudi Arabia. A common attribute amongst non-native speakers of English is the desire to speak English in a native-like manner and this is from understandability as well as a pronunciation perspective. It was noted in a study done by Fang and Ren (2018) that students admitted to trying to imitate native-like pronunciation when attempting to speak English. In addition to this, Galloway and Rose (2017) found that teachers and educational institutions had encouraged students to adapt their English to sound more native-like and this is because people throughout the world believe that the standard model of teaching and speaking English is the only acceptable option. In the context of Saudi Arabia, English is taught as a foreign language to the students at all levels of inquiry and it is done according to a standard nativism model. Statistically, the level of English proficiency throughout the country is unfortunately low, along with other expanding circle countries and some of those who do speak English, speak a Saudi variety of English. Yet in saying this, Javid et al. (2012) states that there are more non-native speakers of English in the world than there are native speakers of English and this therefore presents English varieties as a more popular international norm. This supports the idea that these varieties should be accepted as Global Englishes. The overall results from the current study corresponded with results derived from other studies of similar natures (Deniz Biricik et al., 2016; Galloway & Rose, 2014; Lai, 2008; Rahayu, 2020; Rose & Galloway, 2017; Sadeghpour & Sharifian, 2017) which shows that the context amongst Saudi university English teachers is shared globally, particularly amongst other expanding circle countries.

The first research question sought to explore whether the Saudi university English teachers were aware of the paradigm of Global Englishes. The results showed that overall, the teachers were not aware of this concept. They offered their own descriptions of what they thought the concept referred to yet none of them were correct. The same outcome was founded in other studies in countries such as Indonesia (Rahayu, 2020), Taiwan (Lai, 2008) and Australia where English teachers that took part in the study predominantly teach foreign non-native English speakers (Sadeghpour & Sharifian, 2017). Our results identified one individual participant who declared he had a professional background in sociolinguistics. The reflections of this participant are important to discuss as throughout the focus group interview it became apparent that with his accurate knowledge and understanding of Global Englishes he rejected its legitimacy and strongly believed in the standard nativism approach. This response is interesting as research points towards a lack of concrete awareness amongst teachers typically leads to a tendency of not to accept the framework, not having an awareness.

The second research question investigates whether or not the teachers found the Global Englishes model to be a legitimate framework to teach English with. The results suggest that several participants did not view Global Englishes in a legitimate light and we believe that this is primarily due to their lack of initial concrete awareness. The paradigm is very broad and at the moment very overwhelming. The teachers believed that the standard nativism model was adequate enough to legitimately strive towards teaching the most widely accepted linguistic and cultural form of English. Yet Crystal (2003) argues that the standard nativism model does not effectively embody the cultural and verified linguistic reality that is practiced across non-native countries that fall within the outer and especially the expanding circle. Jenkins (2014) created a module called "Global Englishes: A resource book for students" with the aim of offering a tangible guideline that students may use (and teachers may teach with) as an innovative way of opening the door for Global Englishes to start being incorporated into English syllabi, yet this is one of very few resources available. This can contribute to our findings of lack of awareness as well as the teacher's views of illegitimacy as there is little available at the moment to present to them. At the moment, Global Englishes is still largely theoretical yet once more research is done on the status of Global Englishes and its strengths are acknowledged, thereafter can a more tangible teaching framework be designed, which will hopefully lead to more teachers accepting its legitimacy.

Through thematic analysis, one analytically emerging theme that contributed to the second research question was the concept that if not Global Englishes, what do the participants believe is a legitimate framework? The results showed participants suggested either American English or British English as their source of English nativism. This led to an interesting finding as the participants who were inflexible in their decision to follow the British English model were older in age and were nationals of countries that historically had been under British colonization and influence at some point. These countries were India, Pakistan and Sudan. Kachru (1986) argues in his concentric circle theory that the spread of English and the way in which a country incorporates a language is strongly linked to that country's history with the language. India, Pakistan and Sudan all fall within the outer circle and all were at some point under British influence (Morrow, 2004), therefore it is understandable that this specific standard nativism variety is supported with confidence by the respective participants. This information shows that countries that fall within the expanding circle do not have the same historical English influence and assembly as those in the outer circle. This possibly has led to even more variations of English being practiced in truth in the expanding circles, offering a legitimate reason for the introduction of Global Englishes. This result also points towards Saudi universities being an excellent candidate for incorporating a Global Englishes curriculum as there is already a vastly diverse presence of international English varieties for students to

actively engage with and learn about from their foreign teachers (Al-Asmari & Khan, 2014).

The third and final research question asked whether the teachers would incorporate a Global Englishes model into their teaching practices. As with many other similar studies conducted (Deniz Biricik et al., 2016; Lai, 2008; Rahayu, 2020; Rose & Galloway, 2017; Sadeghpour & Sharifian, 2017), the participants were hesitant to the idea of teaching English according to a Global Englishes framework. This result is a reflection of the teacher's lack of awareness as well as their belief that Global Englishes is illegitimate. One can understand why the teachers feel this way as once again, there is no tangible course or syllabus available to show them what a Global Englishes teaching framework would look like in practice. Galloway and Rose (2014) acknowledge that the incorporation of a Global Englishes teaching framework is a daunting task for teachers as there are very few materials available to them as of yet. It is apparent that there is a deeply rooted sense of support that participants showed for the standard nativism model, reinforced by the opinion that not only Standard English should be taught, but Standard Arabic should also only be taught in the Arab world context. One way that such opinions could possibly be changed would be to present the teachers with more palpable and applied resources showcasing the specificities and possibilities Global Englishes may have to offer, specifically adapted for a Saudi context.

6. Conclusion and Implications

The aim of this study was to explore Saudi university English teachers' perceptions of Global Englishes, to which the results showed dominantly uninformed misconceptions and persistent support to not stray away from the standard nativism approach to English teaching. It is clear that throughout the vast number of studies that have been conducted thus far, informed awareness of what Global Englishes truly represents has been a highly significant variable to consider. Without a structured and correct understanding of Global Englishes, all further methods of inquiry will likely lead to a similar outcome and that is uncertainty, denial and hesitation from the teachers perspective. This is understandable seeing as there is very little relevant material available for them to engage with. The linguistic context in Saudi Arabia is no different to that of other expanding circle countries and there is much progress to still be made regarding English language teaching. The paradigm of Global Englishes is steadily becoming a sociolinguistic reality and with this comes the opportunity for pedagogical changes to align regarding international English language teaching. This is especially relevant to expanding circle countries. It would be beneficial if programs and diversified Global Englishes material were to be developed and initiated in English teaching contexts. However, before such resources can be established and implemented, the spreading of foundational Global Englishes awareness amongst students and teachers is imperative.

This article calls for further research to see if prior awareness is raised to an adequate level of understanding, would the opinions of teacher's differ and possibly be more inclined to acknowledge and accept the legitimacy of Global Englishes, and then in turn would they be more open to practicing it in their teachings. If additional research deems successful and the strengths of a Global Englishes framework were esteemed, pedagogical changes would need to be endorsed at a ministerial level to encourage institutions that may pose similar hesitations towards Global Englishes due to possible lack of awareness or understanding. This study also calls for more research on the area of language ideologies as it is one of the areas that plays a significant role in shaping language teachers perceptions (Karakas, 2017).

References

- Al-Asmari, D. A. M., & Khan, M. S. R. (2014). World Englishes in the EFL Teaching in Saudi Arabia. *Arab World English Journal*, 5(1), 316 -325
- Aldawsari, M., & Karakas, A. (2021). Does the Saudi English Language Curriculum reflect the current state of English?: A documentary analysis from a Global Englishes perspective. *Taiwan Journal of TESOL*, 18(2), 1-28.
- Almegren, A. (2018). Saudi Students' Attitude towards World Englishes. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics and English Literature*, 7(4), 238. <https://doi.org/10.7575/aiac.ijalel.v.7n.4p.238>
- Boyatzis, R. E. (1998). *Transforming qualitative information: Thematic analysis and code development*. SAGE.
- Cohen, M. B., & Garrett, K. J. (1999). Breaking the Rules: A Group Work Perspective on Focus Group Research. *British Journal of Social Work*, 29(3), 359-372. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordjournals.bjsw.a011462>
- Crystal, D. (2003). *English as a global language* (2nd ed). Cambridge University Press.
- Deniz Biricik, E., Özkan, Y., & Bayyurt, Y. (2016). English as a Lingua Franca: Reflections on ELF-related issues by pre-service English language teachers in Turkey. *The Reading Matrix*, 16(2), 144-161.
- EF English Proficiency Index. (2019). *EF EPI 2019 – Saudi Arabia*. Retrieved from <https://www.ef.com/ca/epi/regions/middle-east/saudi-arabia/>
- Fang, F., & Ren, W. (2018). Developing students' awareness of Global Englishes. *ELT Journal*, 72(4), 384-394. <https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccy012>
- Galloway, N., & Rose, H. (2014). Using listening journals to raise awareness of Global Englishes in ELT. *ELT Journal*, 68(4), 386-396. <https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccu021>
- Galloway, N., & Rose, H. (2015). *Introducing Global Englishes*. Abingdon: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315734347>
- Galloway, N., & Rose, H. (2018). Incorporating global Englishes into the ELT classroom. *ELT Journal*, 72(1), 3-14.

<https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccx010>

- Ghobain, E. (2010). *ESP in medical schools and the balance between EFL and ELF from students' perspective: A study at Jazan University*. MA Dissertation. University of Warwick.
- Greenbaum, T. L. (1998). *The handbook for focus group research*. SAGE. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412986151>
- Ho, D. G. E. (2006). The focus group interview: Rising to the challenge in qualitative research methodology. *Australian Review of Applied Linguistics*, 29(1), 5.1-5.19. <https://doi.org/10.2104/ara10605>
- Javid, C., Farooq, M., & Gulzar, M. (2012). Saudi English-Major undergraduate and English teachers' perception regarding effective ELT in the KSA: a comparative study. *European Journal of Social Sciences*, 85(1), 55-57.
- Jenkins, J. (2007). *English as a Lingua Franca: Attitude and identity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Jenkins, J. (2014). *Global Englishes: A resource book for students*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315761596>
- Jenkins, J., & Leung, C. (2013). English as a Lingua Franca. In A. J. Kunnan (Ed.), *The companion to language assessment* (pp. 1605-1616). John Wiley & Sons, Inc. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118411360.wbcla047>
- Jenkins, J., Modiano, M., & Seidlhofer, B. (2001). Euro-English. *English Today*, 17(4), 13-19. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0266078401004023>
- Kachru, B. B. (1986). *The alchemy of English: The spread, functions, and models of non-native Englishes*. University of Illinois Press.
- Karakaş, A. (2017). Students' perceptions of "Good English" and the underlying ideologies behind their perceptions. *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, 13(2), 487-509.
- Lai, H. Y. T. (2008). English as an international language? Taiwanese university teachers' dilemma and struggle. *English Today*, 24(3), 39-45. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0266078408000278>
- Mahboob, A., & Elyas, T. (2014). English in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia: English in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. *World Englishes*, 33(1), 128-142. <https://doi.org/10.1111/weng.12073>
- Morgan, D. L. (1996). Focus Groups. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 22(1), 129-152. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.soc.22.1.129>
- Morrow, P. R. (2004). Perspectives: English in Japan: The world Englishes perspective. *JALT Journal*, 26(1), 79. <https://doi.org/10.37546/JALTJJ26.1-4>
- Rahayu, G. (2020). Indonesia EFL Teachers' Perceptions about teaching English as Lingua Franca. *Language-Edu Journal of Language Teaching and Learning*, 9(1).
- Rose, H., & Galloway, N. (2017). Debating standard language ideology in the classroom: using the 'speak good English movement' to raise awareness of global Englishes. *RELC Journal*, 48(3), 294-301. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0033688216684281>
- Sadeghpour, M., & Sharifian, F. (2017). English language teachers' perceptions of world Englishes: The elephants in the room. *Asian Englishes*, 19(3), 242-258. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13488678.2017.1362782>
- Sewell, A. (2013). English as a lingua franca: ontology and ideology. *ELT Journal*, 67(1), 3-10. <https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccs061>
- Ward, V. M., Bertrand, J. T., & Brown, L. F. (1991). The comparability of focus group and survey results: Three case studies. *Evaluation Review*, 15(2), 266-283. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0193841X9101500207>
- Widdowson, H. G. (1994). The ownership of English. *TESOL Quarterly*, 28(2), 377-389. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3587438>

Copyrights

Copyright for this article is retained by the author(s), with first publication rights granted to the journal.

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).